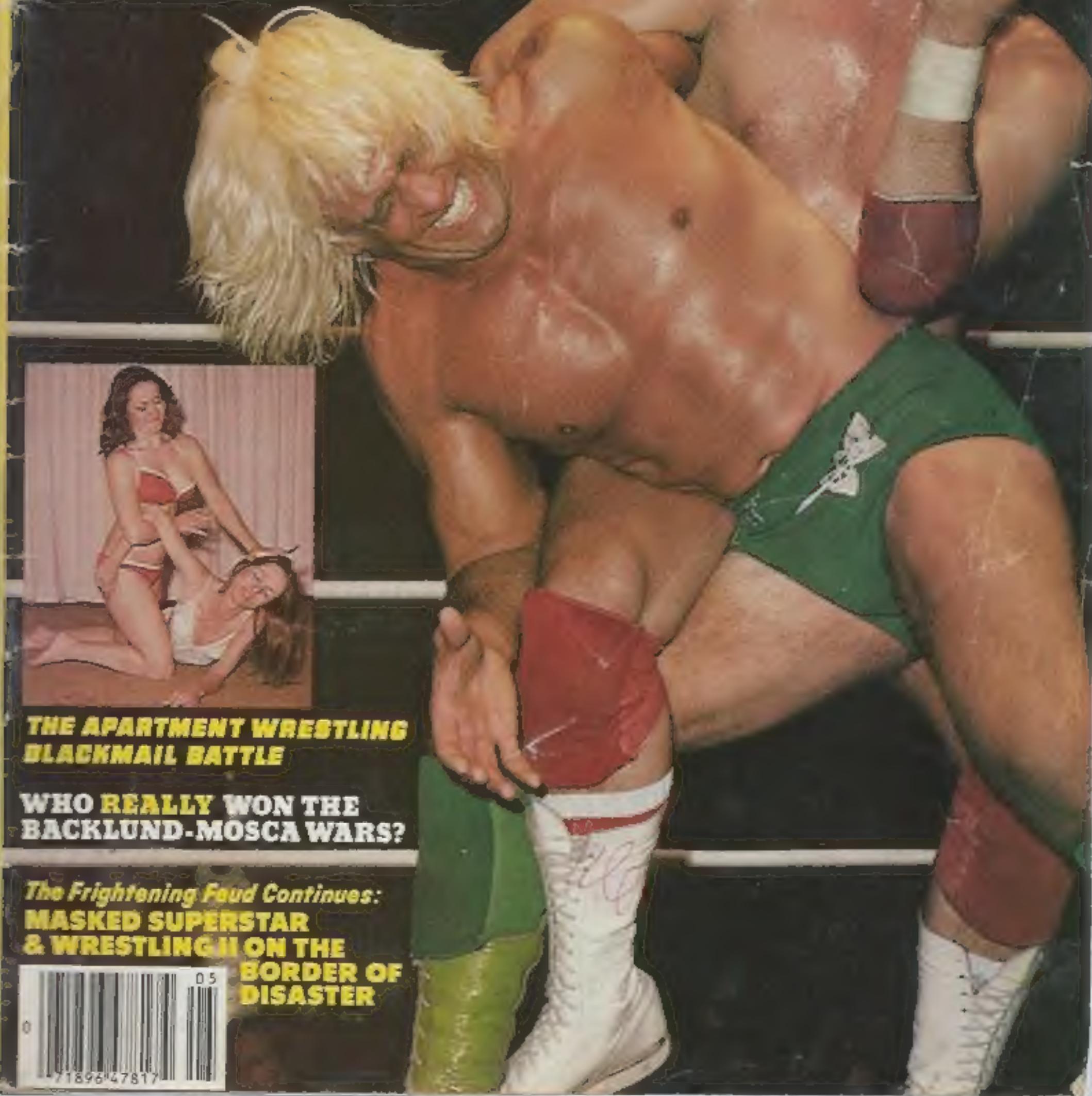


SPORTS REVIEW

May 1982 47817 \$1.50

Wrestling

**This Match Shows... WHY RIC FLAIR
IS NWA CHAMPION...
AND TOMMY RICH IS NOT!**



**THE APARTMENT WRESTLING
BLACKMAIL BATTLE**

**WHO REALLY WON THE
BACKLUND-MOSCA WARS?**

The Frightening Foud Continues:

**MASKED SUPERSTAR
& WRESTLING II ON THE
BORDER OF
DISASTER**



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OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

Champion: BOB BACKLUND
1—ADRIAN ADONIS
2—JESSE VENTURA
3—PEDRO MORALES
4—GREG VALENTINE
5—TONY ATLAS
6—KILLER KHAN
7—Ivan Putski
8—JIMMY SNUKA
9—PAT PATTERSON
10—RICK MARTEL

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

Champion: NICK BOCKWINKEL
1—HULK HOGAN
2—TITO SANTANA
3—KEN PATERA
4—CRUSHER BLACKWELL
5—BARON VON RASCHKE
6—SHEIK ADNAN AL-KAISIE
7—BOBBY DUNCUM
8—GREG GAGNE
9—CRUSHER
10—JIM BRUNZELL

MOST POPULAR

1—ANDRE THE GIANT
2—TOMMY RICH
3—DUSTY RHODES
4—BOB BACKLUND
5—HULK HOGAN
6—RICK STEAMBOAT
7—MIL MASCARAS
8—MR. WRESTLING II
9—PEDRO MORALES
10—JUNKYARD DOG



ADRIAN ADONIS



HARLEY RACE



BRUISER



TOMMY RICH

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

Champion: RIC FLAIR
1—SGT. SLAUGHTER
2—TOMMY RICH
3—MR. WRESTLING II
4—RODDY PIPER
5—BRUISER
6—DUSTY RHODES
7—HARLEY RACE
8—DAVID VON ERICH
9—TED DIBIASE
10—LES THORNTON

TAG TEAMS

1—THE ANDERSON BROTHERS
2—MR. FUJI & MR. SAITO
3—GREG GAGNE & JIM BRUNZELL
4—JACK & JERRY BRISCO
5—SUPER DESTROYER & MASKED SUPERSTAR
6—MIKE GEORGE & JUNKYARD DOG
7—TONY GAREA & RICK MARTEL
8—KEN PATERA & BOBBY DUNCUM
9—THE MULLIGANS
10—OX BAKER & CARL FERGIE

MOST HATED

1—RIC FLAIR
2—SGT. SLAUGHTER
3—GREG VALENTINE
4—KEN PATERA
5—BOB ROOP
6—KILLER KHAN
7—ADRIAN ADONIS
8—KEVIN SULLIVAN
9—DAVID VON ERICH
10—EDDY MANSFIELD

THE TATTER

CORRESPONDENTS

Larry Cohen
Chicago, Ill.
Warren Knowles
Seattle, Wash.
Allison Corey
New York, N.Y.
Andre Camus
Montreal, Canada
Buddy Ford
St. Louis, Mo.
Masanori Murikami
Tokyo, Japan
Andy Rankowski
Portland, Ore.
Myron Roth
Miami, Fla.
Clifford Douglas
Denver, Colo.
Kevin McCloud
Boston, Mass.
Leroy Jackson
Detroit, Mich.
Danny Torres
Los Angeles, Ca.
B.W. Foreman
Atlanta, Ga.
Paul Dreiser
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Carl Salinger
Richmond, Va.
Geoffrey York
Toronto, Canada
Charles F. Amberson
St. Paul, Minn.
Cedric Coleridge
Sydney, Australia
George Hawkins
Bangor, Me.
Ed Remington
Indianapolis, Ind.
Diane Goh
Honolulu, Hi.
James Washington
Houston, Tex.
John West
Baltimore, Md.
Ellen Larsen
Charlotte, N.C.
Butch Gallagher
San Francisco, Ca.
Virginia W. Sloan
Amarillo, Tex.
Randy Swift
Memphis, Tenn.
Barry Simon
Tampa, Fla.

ST. LOUIS, MO—The hottest feud in many years has taken the town by storm. Ric Flair and Bruiser are on a collision course that promises one spectacular crash.

It's only natural that Flair and Bruiser would be at each other's throat. Bruiser is a wily veteran who cares more about the sport than he does about himself. By comparison, Flair is a cocky youngster who asks only what wrestling can do for



BRUISER

him. Bruiser is determined to take the title from a champion he calls "a spoiled brat."

After Bruiser took the Missouri title, he became a top

(Continued on page 54)

Never before in this history of wrestling journalism have so many respected reporters been involved in so important a venture. The best wrestling correspondents from all over the world have been enlisted to report on the news behind the news. Every wrestling fan must consider this the most important column he can read!

The Inquiring Reporter

No one knows wrestling better than the fans.

Because of this, we're now

giving these experts a forum for their views and opinions. Each month, we'll ask a controversial question and have the fans answer—no matter what those answers might be!

THE QUESTION:

"Should disqualifications be eliminated from wrestling?"

THE ANSWERS:

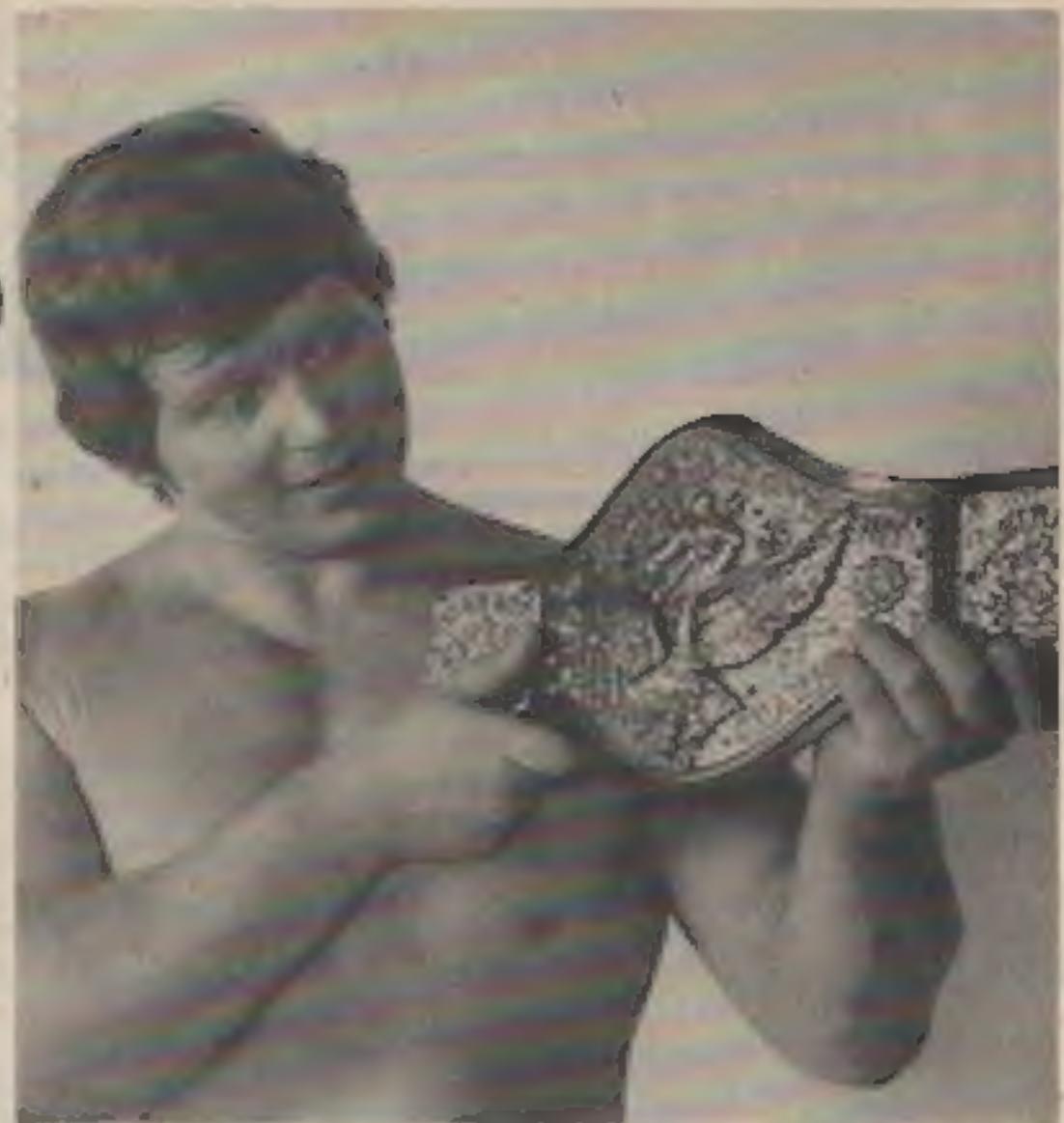
Scott Meese, Philadelphia, PA: "Absolutely. There are too many sleazy men in wrestling—scum like Muraco who will do anything possible to get themselves disqualified if they're even close to losing their belt. Fortunately, it was a Texas Death Match the day Muraco ran headlong into Morales to lose his Intercontinental title, so there was no such thing as disqualification. Either get rid of the disqualification rule altogether, or make every title match a Texas Death Match."

Claudia Hophog, Holbrook, NY: "Yes. Too many wrestlers get away from a title match with all their senses and their championship intact. If someone like Jesse Ventura didn't have to think twice about bloodying Backlund's baby face, Howdy Doody certainly wouldn't have lasted four years as champion. As soon as someone tries to get tough with Backlund, boom, he's disqualified. I'm for

(Continued on page 58)



Magnificent Muraco retained the Intercontinental title on several occasions by intentionally getting himself disqualified. When he lost the belt to Pedro Morales, the disqualification rule was waived.



Bob Backlund admires his prized possession, the World Wrestling Federation championship belt (above). Backlund pounds out a victory over Magnificent Muraco, one of his toughest challenges in four years as champion (below).

FOR THE PAST four years, Bob Backlund has brought honor and dignity to the WWF championship. He has accepted all challenges, faced many betrayals, won over skeptical fans, and has dominated the WWF. For his superb record, we name him Wrestler of the Month on the fourth anniversary of his title victory.

It is doubtful any other wrestler so young could have handled the title pressure as well as Backlund. He was assaulted from all sides. His schedule was killing. Despite his honorable behavior, WWF officials never gave him a break when it came to controversy. Everything he won he earned himself.

It wasn't easy. As he traveled too much and made too many defenses, there must have been moments when he thought of taking the easy way out. Break a few rules or cripple a feared opponent and end the threat. Any

dishonorable shortcut must have been tempting to the overworked grappler. At the same time, many of his opponents used every dirty trick in the book. Yet, with a sense of honor that does all wrestling proud, Backlund remained true to scientific wrestling principles.

Looking back on it, Bob reflects, "I wasn't always proud of myself, but I was never ashamed. I lost my temper too much, and there's no excuse for that. The mark of a true champion is to always be in control. There were times, I'm afraid, I was less than a true champion."

"I've been very lucky. You can't keep any title four years without luck. Arnold Skoaland, my manager, says luck is the residue of skill. I just figure I can't help it if I'm lucky."

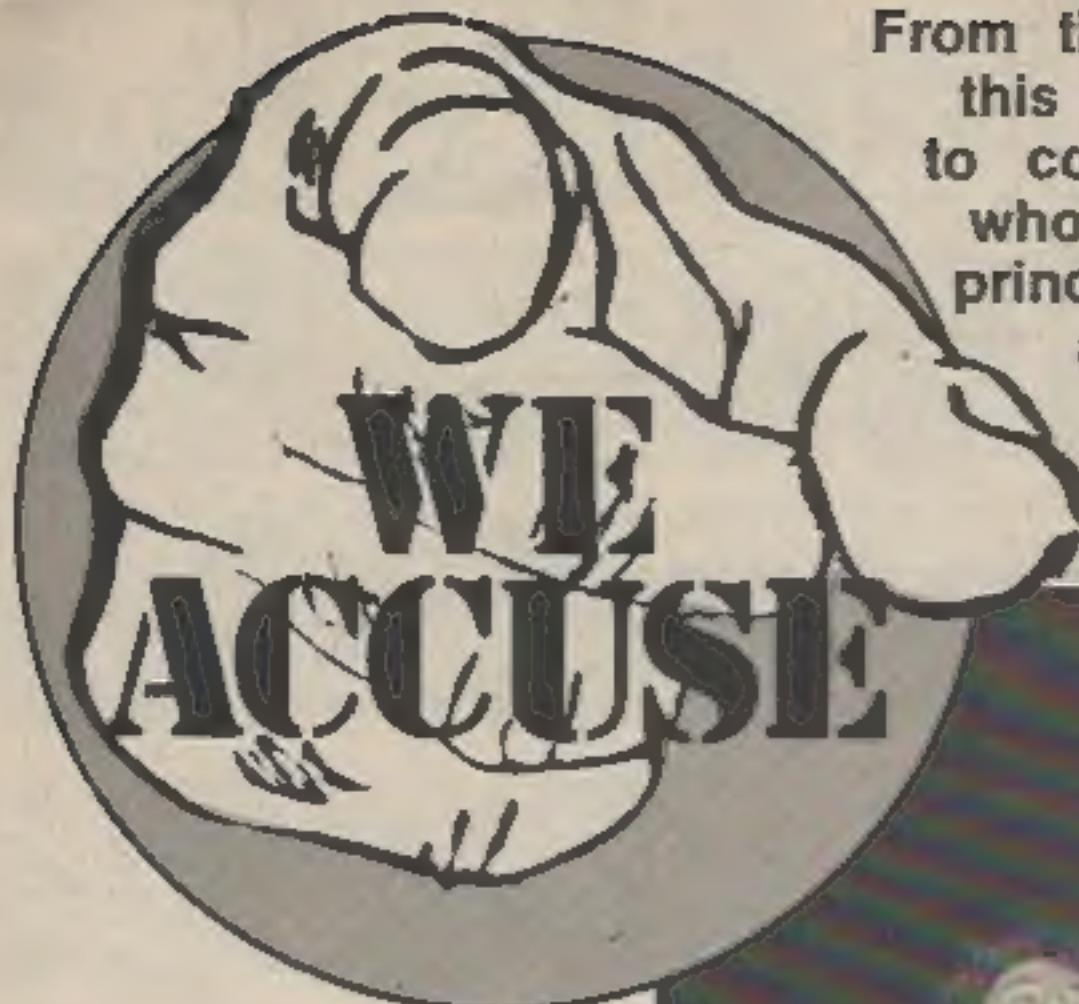
"I've been really lucky to have Arnold as my manager. He's really a steady influence. The fans don't realize how hard he works to prepare me for matches. In a really



tough match, I might improvise 10 percent of my strategies. Usually, I stick pretty close to the strategy worked out by Arnold and myself. Arnold brings the best out of me."

"Also, at times when it seems the ordeal of being champ is too much, Arnold keeps me on an even keel."

(Continued on page 52)



From time to time, the editors of this magazine find it necessary to condemn those in wrestling who would subvert the basic principles of decency, integrity, and honesty. Without such truths, our sport will die



Highly uncharacteristic of the man formerly loved and admired by all, David Von Erich runs his opponent, the popular Mike Graham, along the ring apron into the metal ringpost.

THERE IS NOTHING sadder than a family torn apart by dissension. Today, there are few families sadder than the Von Erichs. The man responsible for their sorrow is James J. Dillon, with a little help from the Funks.

As everyone knows by now, David Von Erich turned rule-breaker and won the Southern title. He was managed by Dillon. Von Erich met Dillon at the Funks' ranch, where Terry and Dory Jr. purposely got the pair together. The Funks have long hated the Von Erichs, with the exception of David. There is nothing the Funks want more than to see that family at war with itself.

James J. Dillon is one of the greatest salesmen in the world. Instinctively, he can guess a person's dreams and fears, then use them for his own advantage. It wasn't hard for him to get David's mind reeling out of control.

Dillon worked on both David's dream and fear. First, he exploited David's fear that he would be lost as one of the Von Erich brothers, spending his whole career considered as one of a trio. Dillon made the young man see a future in which he could never win a title, yet never be taken seriously for

himself. This terror ate into David.

Then Dillon showed how David could conquer his fear and at the same time realize his dream of becoming champion. All David would have to do was allow Dillon to manage him. Forget what his father and brothers told him. Dillon instructed David, and think for himself. That's the first step needed to establish his identity apart from his brothers.

The Funks aided Dillon any way they could. They explained to David that Dillon was his only chance. After all, the Funks established their own identities, didn't they? And hadn't they each won the NWA championship? There is no other brother team that can make that boast, they pointed out.

No religious cult ever
(Continued on page 63)

TOP WRESTLER ANSWER YOUR QUESTION

Do you have a question which concerns all of wrestling? Each month in SPORTS REVIEW WRESTLING, the sport's top superstars will answer a question sent in by a reader. If you wish to have your question answered by the wrestlers, send it to:
ASK THE STARS
Sports Review Wrestling
Box 48
Rockville Centre, N.Y.
11571

The "Question of the Month" is:

"What do you get out of wrestling?"

Submitted by:
Patricia Riddle,
Cumberland,
Virginia



RIC FLAIR

"Wrestling gives me power. Being champion, I can control my life and the lives of others. I'm treated like a celebrity—I am a celebrity—and I don't have to suffer all the indignities peons have to suffer. Yeah, I like the power wrestling gives me."



TOMMY RICH

"Wrestling gives me the greatest gift any man can have—I can earn a living doing what I love best. If professional wrestling wasn't my career, I'd be doing it in my spare time. This way, I have all the time I need to hone my skills. Professional wrestling gives me the chance to be as good as I can be."



HULK HOGAN

"I get to hear fans cheer me. It's great to know you're doing something that is important to someone besides yourself. Wrestling makes whatever I do important. Hell, millions of guys go to work in the morning and come home at night and it doesn't mean a bucket of spit to the guy sitting next to them. When I work, entire arenas go crazy. That's special."



TONY GAREA

"Aside from the joys of wrestling, I also get to see the world. I've been all over, lived all ways, and met all kinds of wonderful people. If I had a regular job, I might get away twice a year, and then probably only to some resort. Wrestling makes it easy for a man who doesn't care where he's going if it isn't where he's been. Can you imagine a better life than that?"

WRESTLERS ANSWER OF THE MONTH



RODDY PIPER

"No man is an all-around genius. Albert Einstein couldn't figure out how to properly put a nail into a piece of wood. My area of genius is wrestling. In other areas, I'm no more than astonishingly brilliant, but in wrestling I am a genius. There's nothing more sad than a genius not allowed to take advantage of his gifts. Professional wrestling gives me that chance."



GREG VALENTINE

"If it wasn't for professional wrestling, I wouldn't be rich. I like money. Guys I grew up with are making one-quarter of what I earn. Of course, they deserve one-quarter of what I earn. Still, if it wasn't for wrestling, I'd be working in some dreary factory with a bunch of losers. Today, I live a great life. Beat that."



BRAD ARMSTRONG

"Wrestling gives me a chance to work with my father. When I was growing up, he was away from home a good deal. He was always wrestling somewhere. Now, I go with him. I guess I'm getting the chance to be with my father, the chance I never had as a kid. Wrestling took him away and now it's giving him to me."



PEDRO MORALES

"After it's all said and done, I guess the most I've gotten out of wrestling are the friends. Inside and outside the sport, I've met some wonderful people. I've had momentary friendships and lasting friendships. I never would have met all these fine people if I weren't a wrestler. The people you meet as a wrestler are the greatest rewards the sport can give."



JAY YOUNGBLOOD

"Professional wrestlers don't have to get up early in the morning, and that's what I like best about it. My father got up at seven in the morning every day for as long as I can remember. That's when I decided to find a job where I could sleep late. A professional wrestler need never wake up before noon. There's no greater fringe benefit in any job anywhere."



IVAN KOLOFF

"I like to hurt people. The greatest sensation in the world is feeling a man weaken as you crush the strength out of him. In the most primitive kind of test, one man against the other, being victorious is the greatest feeling on earth. I'm never happier than when my opponent has to be carried out on a stretcher. Wrestling gives me that happiness."

The Frightening Feud Continues

MR. WRESTLING II added a fifth egg to the mixture. A quick flick of the blender switch and the yolks combined with the whites to produce a pale orange liquid that was consumed in three gulps.

"Ah, that's the ticket," sighed II as he placed the glass container into the dishwasher, "five raw eggs and a few tablespoons of protein powder and I'm all ready for training."

The basement of II's Georgia home is well equipped to handle this wrestler's training needs. As he adjusted the weight distribution on the bench press portion of his weight machine, II spoke about his upcoming schedule.

"I'm going to be traveling all over the area," said II. "I'll be in Georgia, in Tennessee, and maybe even both of the Carolinas. The way the contracts are set up so far, it looks as if I'll be getting a good shot at that masked slime."

The "slime" that II is referring to is of course none other than the Masked Superstar. These two men have been locked in a feud that appears to be building up steam rather than abating, and the crux of the war is nothing less than the mantle of honor for modern day masked wrestling.

"Masked Superstar is truly a disgrace to the traditions of masked wrestling that stretch back many hundreds of years," accused II. "I try to adhere to these traditions, to carry them forward into the future. Mil Mascaras is another man who I feel is trying to maintain the highest standards of masked wrestlers. When you have vermin like Spoiler or Super Destroyer in the sport, it destroys all the work that Mascaras and El Canek and myself have done."

"Among all of them, Masked Superstar is without a doubt the worst," II continued. "His blatant disregard for any kinds of tradition

MASKED SUPERSTAR & WRESTLING II ON THE BORDER OF DISASTER

More than winning or losing is at stake in the battle between Mr. Wrestling II and Masked Superstar. There are vital principles involved. Long a figure of honor in the tradition of the great masked grapplers, II is deeply disturbed by his arch rival... and intends to do something about it.





Mr. Wrestling II secures a
hammerlock on Masked Superstar.



or ideals of sportsmanship makes my blood boil. Worse than that, he acts in this way on a personal as well as professional level. In all ways, he's scum

"Other wrestlers have told me stories," said II, "stories about how Superstar bad-mouths me in the dressing rooms when I'm not there. If that isn't the most cowardly, most spineless thing in the world, I don't know what is. It would be one thing if he were to say something to my face where I could answer him man to man, but it's pure weakness to do it behind my back where he doesn't have to face the consequences of his words."

"I'll tell you, though, I'm getting damn fed up to here with all of his crap, and I'm not going to stand for it much longer."



With a slight grunt, II began a series of weightlifts that continued without a pause until he reached 30.

"Thirty presses like that and I'm all warmed up for a good training session," II remarked. He paused for a moment, however, to reflect on the anger he had just let show.

"It's not good. I don't like myself when I get this way," II said. "but in this case there just isn't anything I can do about it. Masked Superstar really gets under my skin."

II struck a reflective mood and stared off into the distance, lost in deep thought. After another short pause, he broke the silence.

The war between Mr. Wrestling II and Masked Superstar is much more than a matchup of bitter enemies. The sanctity of the tradition of masked wrestling is at stake. II leaps with both feet upon Superstar above), but Superstar recovers and viciously rips at II's eyes (above right).



Men like Wrestling II Mil Máscaras and El Canek have worked long and hard to better the image of masked wrestlers. It will not sit around while a Masked Superstar Spoiler, or Super Destroyer tarnishes that image.

"This feud may be going too far," he said. "I don't know." Mr. Wrestling II's anger had changed to worry and it clearly disturbed him.

"I feel as if I'm reaching the point of no return, you know what I mean?" II asked. "I think that something is going to happen soon."

and when it does, that I'll have no control over it whatsoever. I'm afraid of what that might mean. I may just slip over the edge in the ring some night, and if that does happen, I won't be responsible for my actions. I don't know. The situation is there, but I don't want to think about it anymore."

II returned to the weight machine, adding new muscle to an already formidable physique. He remarked that training is sometimes the only way to work a nagging problem like this out of the system. Then he indicated that he was probably in for a very long, very grueling session. □

CRUSHER WOULD BE the first to insist that he is not the one who has changed, only that the times have caught up with him. Where once jeers and distaste characterized the fans' response to his wrestling style, now there is only warmth and affection.

His raucous lifestyle is still the same: beer drinking in considerable quantities as part of the training 'regimen', carousing with women of all sorts of size and shape, long evenings spent with old friends swapping stories not fit for grammar school and remarks improper for family dinners.

"I'm still the same ol' fun-loving Crusher I always was," he said, twisting off the top of a beer can. "I could never figure out why the fans didn't take to me. I guess when I started pounding on the bad dudes the fans started whooping and cheering and seeing that ol' Crusher wasn't such a bad sort after all. Hey, my buddies could of told them that long ago."

For the first part of his career, Crusher was a notorious

rulebreaker. Then, when he entered the AWA, he began wrestling his former sadistic colleagues. At that point the fan metamorphosis began.

"Again, it wasn't anything I did. I was still the same. Only my opponents were different," Crusher said. "Yeah, maybe I mellowed a little, but not all that much."

The battles goes out of the ring as Crusher smashes Ray Stevens' head into the press table, rendering Stevens bloody and helpless.



A MAN NAMED CRUSHER

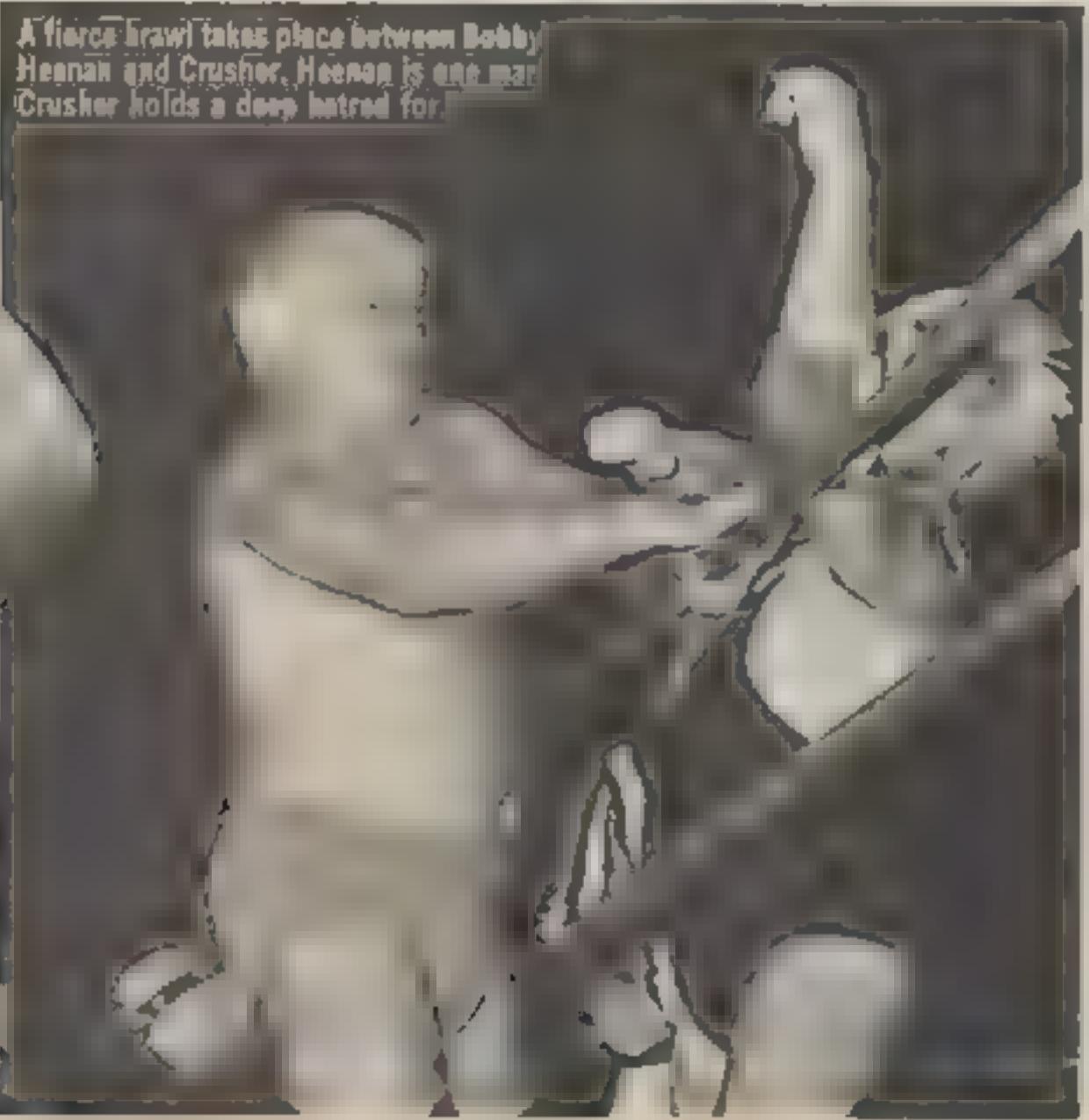
The on-team of Ray Stevens and Nick Bockwinkle are about to have their heads smashed together by the raging Crusher



Throughout the world, the name of Crusher is known, rejected, feared, and loved. What accounts for this combination of contradictions that results in one of wrestling's greats? Read this story and find out for yourself

CRAZY CRUSHER

A fierce brawl takes place between Bobby Heenan and Crusher. Heenan is one man Crusher holds a deep hatred for.



"It was a society thing. For a while, my life style, the down-home truck driver way of life, was in disfavor. Now, what with the hippie generation turning conservative and a beer guzzler like Billy Carter parading around making it a badge of honor to have a pot full of beer, my way of life is accepted more."

Interestingly enough, the careers of Crusher and Bruiser parallel each other. Like Crusher, Bruiser's reputation was initially based upon the groans of dismembered opponents and the jeers of enraged fans. And, while the tune may have changed, the lyrics are the same.

"Me and Bruiser are real good friends. As you know, we've teamed up together and gotten to be good buddies. Bruiser had his problems, also with his way of living, though not as much as me.

"The fans didn't like him. Now they do. You figure it out."

With the admitted tempering of nature comes a street-wise intelligence appealing for its blunt honesty.

"I love wrestling and I don't make no bones about it. Lots of people are afraid to say they

CRUSHER

(Continued)

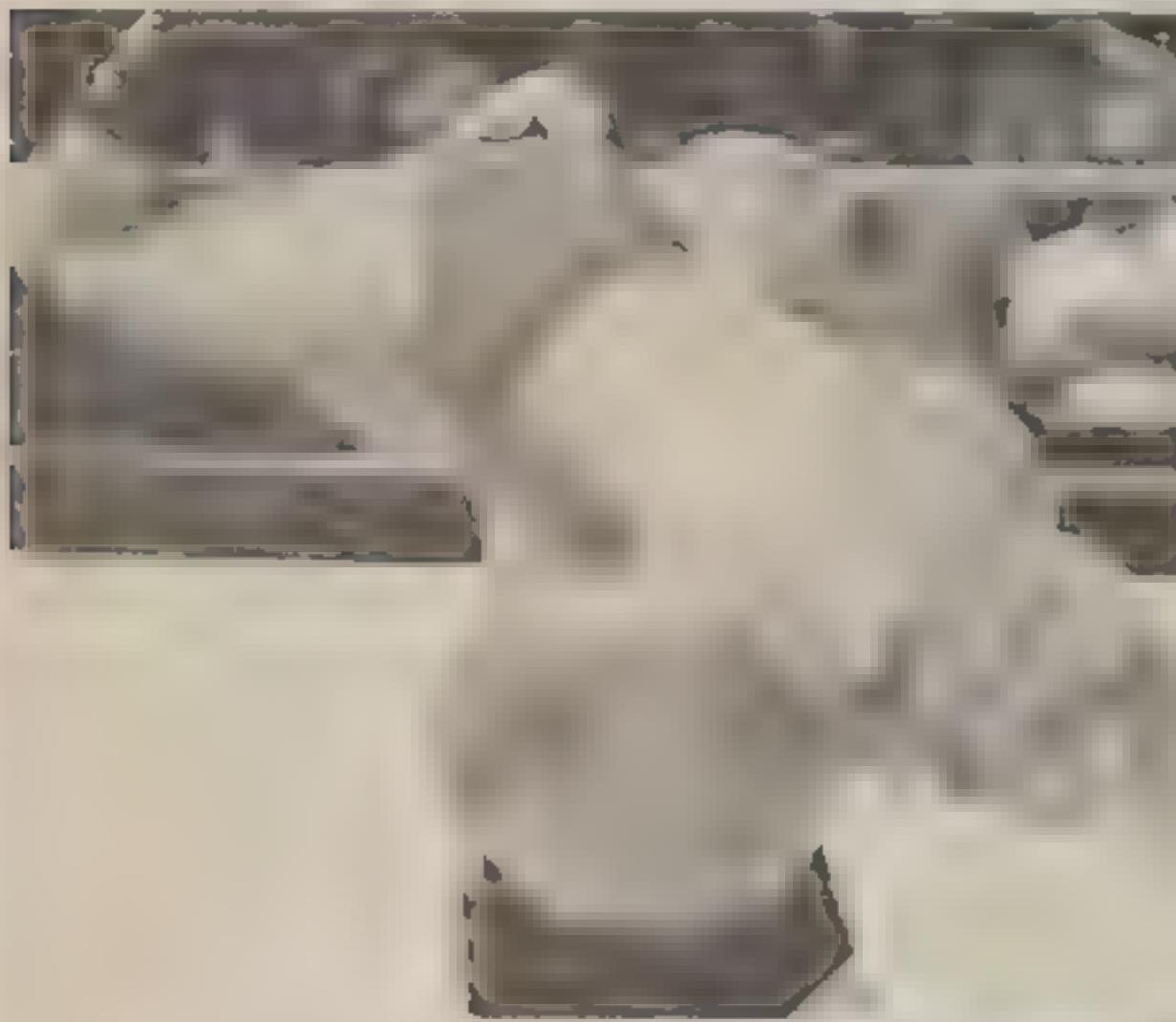
love their work, or their country, or whatever

"I'm just a friendly guy who tries to be honest with everyone. I've been in bars where a different sort of dude has walked in, maybe with hair kinda long. A couple of guys

friends

"What a hell of a guy," said Bruiser. "He'd give you the shirt off his back, if you know what I mean. And he's a damn good wrestler, one of the best."

"He deserves all the praise he's been getting. He's a prince



Crusher bodyslams his opponent (above). Lars Andersson is a recipient of Crusher's terrorizing face ripper (right).

would pass a remark, but I'd stop them right there. A person is a person and I don't care none whether his hair is over his behind or if his skin is purple."

"And that's how I approach my opponents. I'll give the guy the benefit of the doubt. When he proves me wrong, I'll smash his face in. Same with someone I'll meet on the street. I'll treat him like I'd treat anyone. If he shows he's a mean dude I'll treat him accordingly."

Crusher's beguiling frankness is reaffirmed by the plaudits accorded him from his



The masked Super Destroyer was a man the fans wanted Crusher to eliminate. Crusher did the job chasing him out of the area.

of a man."

"I wrestled both of them, Bruiser and Crusher, when they were considered bad guys," said veteran star Wilbur Snyder. "Even then I knew they were good guys. Crusher is a fine man, a real honest person who I tell you what's on his mind and never play games with you. That's the type of friend you want."

Now that Crusher has entered the prime of his life, both in and out of the ring, he has found a compelling philosophy he's more than willing to share with an interested audience.

"Have fun, baby. Go out and live things up, that's what I say." He tore off another beer can top. "Have laughs, have good friends, love your work, family and country, but not necessarily in that order."

"And don't worry about what people say. Sooner or later they'll understand you. And if they don't," he shrugged. "If they don't, make sure you understand yourself!" □

EMBRY VS. DILLON

CHAIN MATCH OF HELL



James J. Dillon demonstrates the brutality of the Chain Match to his young opponent Eric Embry

PHOTOS BY BILL OTTEN

THE ROOTS OF Eric Embry's hatred run deep; almost as deep as the wound inflicted by Florida's former state champion, The Spoiler.

The incident occurred shortly before Spoiler dropped the title

to Mr. Wrestling II. But the fact that Spoiler is no longer champion does not lessen the anger Embry feels.

"It's pretty ironic, isn't it?" asked Embry. "It took the belt and not the champion to hurt

me. As a wrestler, Spoiler couldn't do a thing in the ring to slow me down so he had to resort to hitting me with the Florida belt."

Spoiler's manager, James J. Dillon would have liked to help

Chain Match. These two words represent a contest as agonizingly brutal as it is colorful. The dominant color is red: Red as in blood, and red as in the burning lust for revenge that sizzled in the eyes of James J. Dillon and Eric Embry.



Embry and Dillon battle for control of the chain (above left). Embry directs the chain at his fallen opponent's throat (above right). Wrapping the chain around Embry's throat, Dillon forces blood to spurt from Eric's cuts (below)



In the attack against Embry that day, but his chance came later. Dillon lost a lot of money to Embry when he posted big bucks and offered them to

anyone who could stop one of his wrestlers in less than 10 minutes. Embry has picked up a lot of extra cash in this way, and Dillon isn't pleased one bit by

that fact.

When Dillon tried to renege on some payments, Embry grew incensed. Accusations flew back and forth. The hatred took hold and began to grow.

Contrary to what wrestlers like Bugsy McGraw often say, Dillon is not a coward. Unlike most managers, he will step into the ring himself to avenge one of his men . . . or his own pocketbook. When a Chain Match between Dillon and Embry was suggested, Dillon jumped at the opportunity. Embry didn't hesitate either, seeing a perfect chance to satiate his thirst for revenge that developed from the belt incident.

The dreaded Chain Match. For observers of this grim spectacle, it is a lesson in sheer brutality. For the participants, it is deepest hell bordered by ropes. It is also the ultimate opportunity to punish the opposition.

The match began with each man the holder of one end of the chain. Dillon was the first to act, reeling in his end of the chain while Embry tried to muscle his way into an advantage by pulling Dillon toward him.

Embry was unsuccessful in his ploy and Dillon took the first real offensive advantage of the match. Wrapping the heavy



Dillon calls upon the referee to stop the match before he permanently injures Embry (above left). Dillon, whose face is by now also covered with blood, continues his brutal onslaught (above right). The match had to be stopped when Dillon forced open the cut atop Embry's head (below).



links around Embry's head, the manager tightened his grip so that the chain dug into his rival's eyes. Embry's scream cut through the crowd, but he was far from submission.

Dillon intensified his effort. Relaxing his grip on the chain instantaneously, Dillon let the chain slip from Embry's face to his neck, tightening his hold as he did so. Embry's face contorted from the pain as his scream turned into a choking gurgle.

Reaching up as Dillon applied the pressure, Embry managed to grab Dillon by the

neck and flip him over onto the mat. Seizing the opportunity for an advantage, Embry snatched up the chain and offered no mercy. He lunged at Dillon adding the weight of his body to a blow to Dillon's neck with the chain.

Dillon was not at a disadvantage for long however, as he expertly broke out of Embry's hold and raked the chain across the young man's forehead, opening a wide gash that poured blood into his eyes.

Dillon then swung the chain through the air and brought it

down on top of Embry's head, opening up several stitches that previously held the wound caused by Spoiler. More blood poured into Embry's eyes.

With Embry blinded and almost at a loss for mustering any sort of offensive maneuver, the referee halted the match due to excessive bleeding.

"I showed that punk Embry a lot more mercy than he deserved," boasted Dillon in the dressing room. "As far as I'm concerned, he's still a green rookie. I have a great deal more experience compared to that twerp, and if I really wanted to I could have put him out of wrestling permanently."

The referee, by the way, was not going to stop the match," Dillon explained. "It was only after I called out to him and told him to stop it that he actually did. Embry didn't deserve that kind of mercy, but he wasn't worth any extra effort on my part, either."

Embry himself had no comment on the match instead looking to the immediate future.

"Dillon and The Spoiler will both pay for what they've done to me," vowed the 23-year-old. "I don't care how long it takes or how it's done, or even if I have to get my good friend Bugsy McGraw to help me, Dillon and Spoiler will pay."



This
Match
Shows...

WHY RIC FLAIR IS NWA CHAMPION... AND TOMMY RICH IS NOT!

PHOTOS BY BRAD McFARLIN

TOMMY RICH CONTINUES to claim that he is the rightful NWA champion.

When Rich substituted for Dusty Rhodes in a title match against NWA titleholder Ric Flair in Atlanta last November, the champion was pinned. Yet since it was Rhodes who signed for a title match and not Rich, Flair retained the belt.

Since that incident, Rich and Flair have met several times, and each match has been more violent and explosive than the previous one.

Despite Rich's assertiveness in the ring and his continually more potent threats upon the NWA championship, Flair remains the champion. For those fans fortunate enough to have been in Columbus, Ohio recently, one of the latest matches in the Flair/Rich series proves why this is so.

This match was not a rout, nor was it a matter of Flair maintaining control for the entire length of the contest. Indeed, for a good portion of the face-off Rich held the upper hand.

Yet the combination of Flair's mastery while ahead and his cool calculated efforts while behind prove Flair does in fact deserve to be champion, and

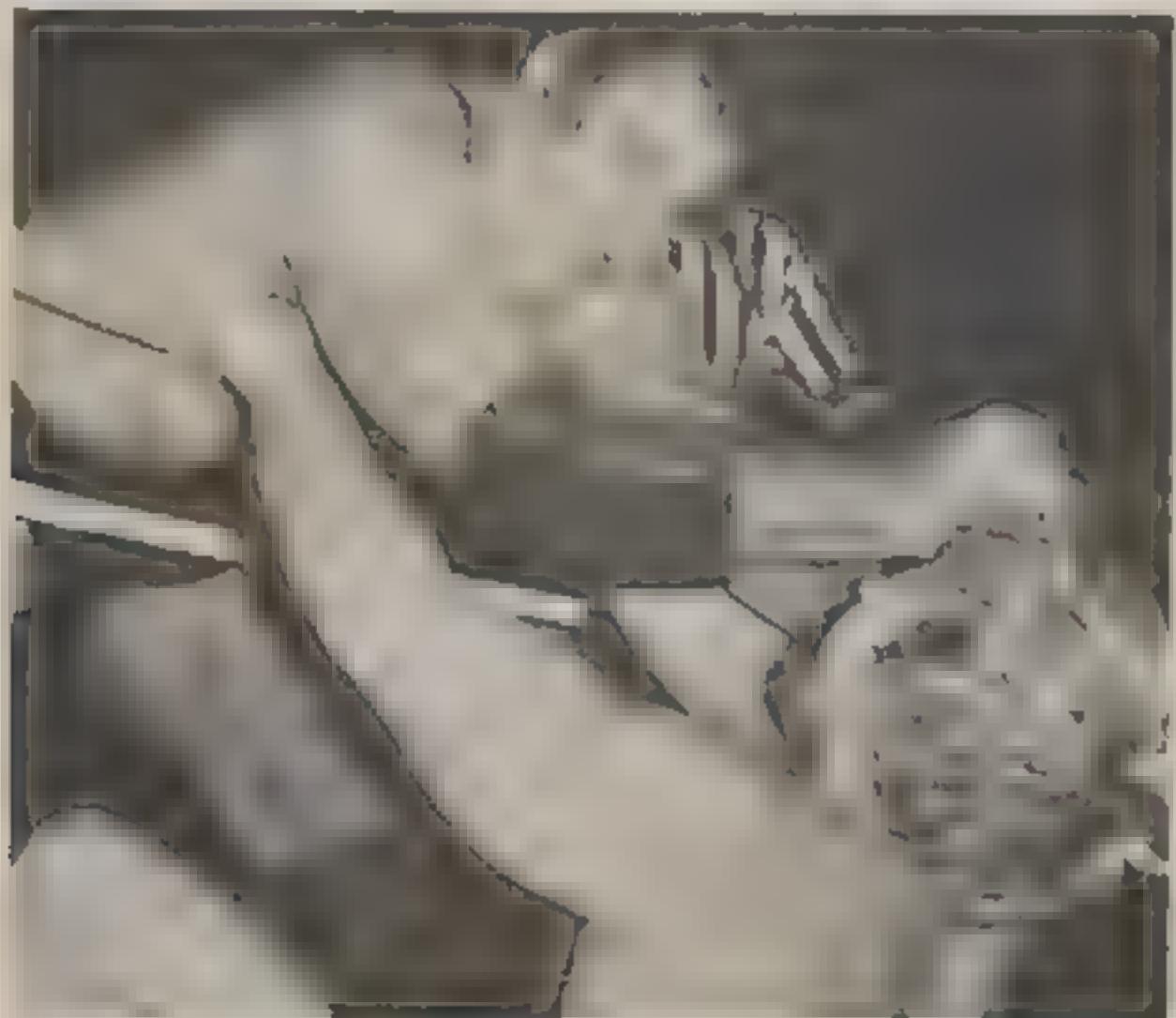
Continued on page 56



Ric Flair and Tommy Rich are two of today's most evenly matched wrestlers. Yet Flair has shown an ability to make the proper move at the proper time providing just the edge needed to retain his NWA title.

When Ric Flair became the NWA champion, he also became the number-one target for number-one contender Tommy Rich. There is usually a fine line between champion and contender, but in the case of Rich and Flair, that line is becoming more and more distinct.

WHO REALLY WON THE BACKLUND- MOSCA WARS?



Having tossed Backlund over the top rope to the arena floor, Mosca is determined to keep the WWF champ on out of the ring. A two-fisted blow to the head knocks Backlund back to the floor.

Winning is much more than simply walking out of the ring with a championship belt around your waist. Exactly how much more is a painful lesson that Bob Backlund recently learned when he found himself at war with King Kong Mosca

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

THE BATTLE is over. Following a time of seemingly perpetual chaos and confusion, Bob Backlund and King Kong Mosca have retreated to their respective headquarters to tend to their wounds and assess their perceived victories.

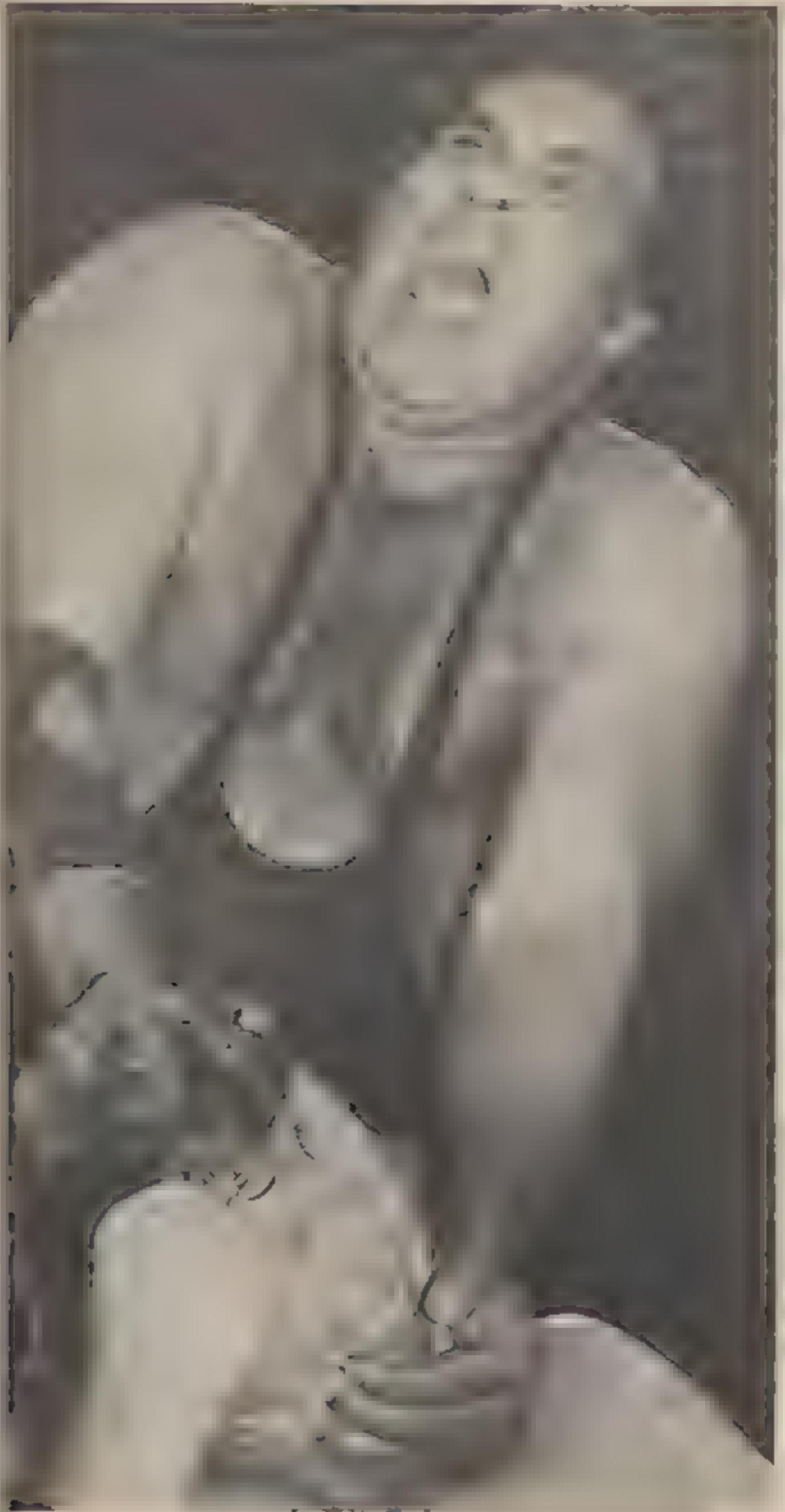
Now that the dust has settled and Mosca has invaded Puerto Rico while Backlund has turned his attention to men like Adrian Adonis and Jesse Ventura, we can examine the conflict between these two powerhouses more objectively. With the benefit of hindsight, we can properly ask who won and who lost. The answer is not as clear as you might expect.

Let us return to the beginning of the recent rivalry, and work from there to retrace the events that led to the ultimate conclusion of one of Backlund's most difficult series of title defenses to date.

It began slowly at first, with Mosca making a few scattered plays at the title that Backlund has held now for four years. Mosca saw something that interested him. He realized along with his manager, Captain Lou Albano, that there might be a way to discover and exploit the one Achilles' heel that Backlund must possess.

Then the escalation occurred. Everywhere Bob Backlund turned, there was King Kong Mosca to greet him. Before he realized it, Backlund was spending every waking minute concerned about the next title defense and the continual assault by a man who, by all rights, shouldn't even be considered his biggest threat.

Then the height of the war. Again and again, relentlessly, Mosca came after Backlund. Wherever Backlund traveled, there followed Mosca. Always there, always posing the threat. Mosca was determined to make or break, make it into the WWF.



champion spot, or break Backlund's determination and character in the process

It all reached a boiling point in Madison Square Garden. Pat Patterson was acting as special referee as Backlund once again faced a challenge by Mosca.

Photographic evidence has been published in the February issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*. As Patterson gave the three count in favor of Backlund, he failed to notice that Mosca's foot was on the rope.



Mosca lets out a horrifying cry as he attempts to twist Backlund's neck to the breaking point (left). Mosca is unafraid of being disqualified (above). He has put his hopes for the WWF belt aside for the opportunity to unleash unrestricted punishment.

This incident touched off a controversy that is still raging within the WWF and among its fans. Bob Backlund may have retained his championship that night in Madison Square Garden, but at what cost? His reputation has been permanently scarred. Fans all across the country look to Backlund as the man whose title is saved by the referees. It is a scar that will not soon heal.

(Continued on page 64)

OUR APOLOGY TO DEWEY ROBERTSON



LATELY, THIS OFFICE has seen a lot of letters similar to the following:

To the editor:

I enjoy your magazine very much, and I like the articles that you print. Your coverage of major wrestlers and wrestling areas is usually pretty good, but I want to bring to your attention a wrestler who doesn't seem to be getting much written about him.

Here in the Missouri area Dewey Robertson is looked upon as perhaps the greatest mat star since maybe even the heyday of Pat O'Connor.

I hope you'll look into things in Missouri. Once you do, you'll realize the same thing that everyone else around here does. Dewey Robertson is headed for superstardom, and there's nobody anywhere who can stop him.

Let's have more on Dewey Robertson!

Sincerely,
Lowell Dixon
St. Louis, MO

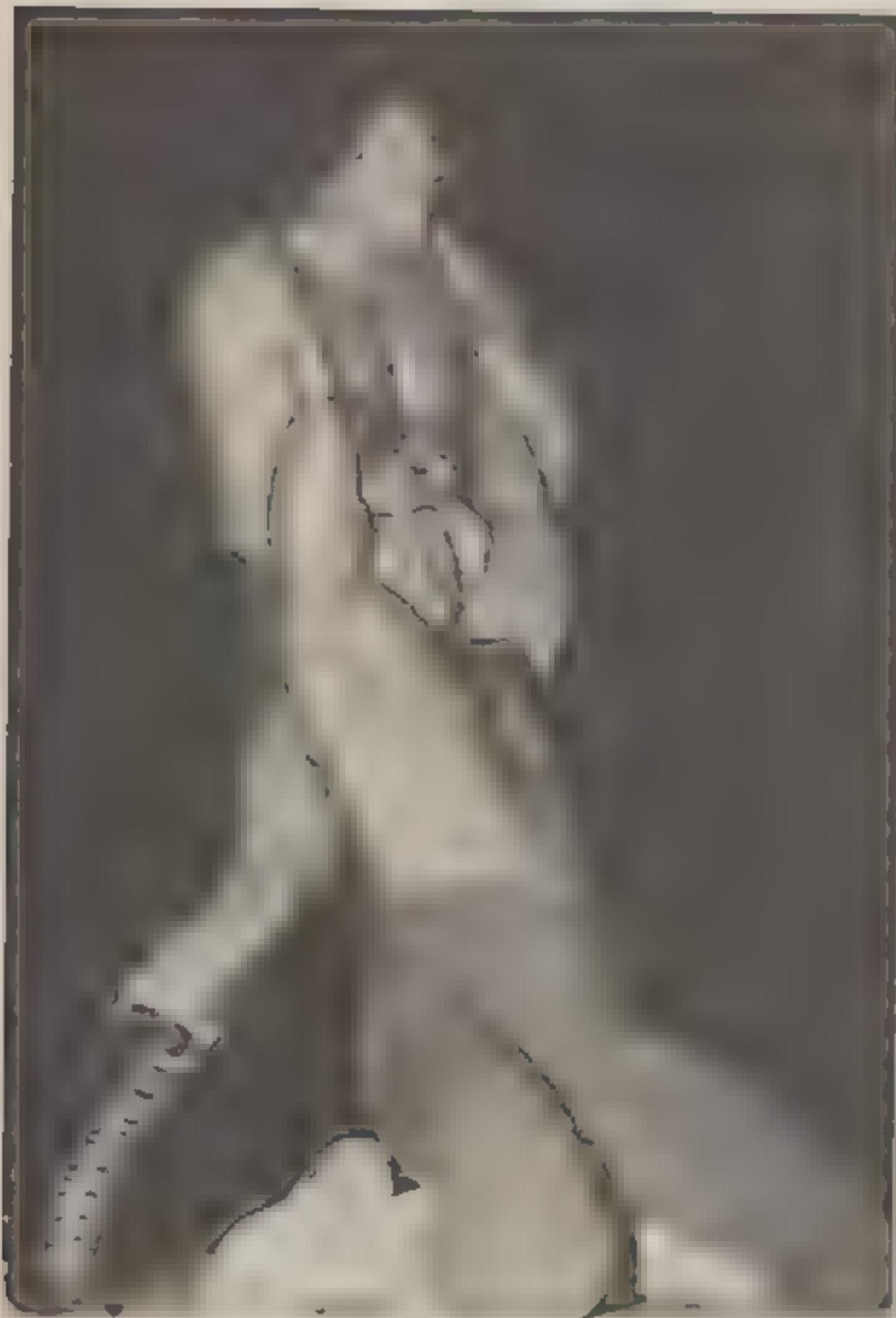


Dewey Robertson too long neglected by SPORTS REVIEW WRESTLING traps Roger Kirby in a abdomen na stretch. Robertson is a master of the science of his sport and never strays from the rulebook.

Well, Lowell, the editors agree. We apologize to Dewey Robertson and especially to all of his fans. We have ignored Robertson all too much, and it is time we rectify the situation.

In a sport as ever-changing and fast moving as wrestling, major title changes tend to attract a great deal of coverage. When Ric Flair took the NWA belt, the press was all over the story.

It's a rare occurrence when the editorial staff of this magazine makes as drastic a mistake as we've made recently. It's even rarer when we admit it! Nevertheless, we've realized that Dewey Robertson has been shortchanged in these pages, and now we'd like to make it up to him

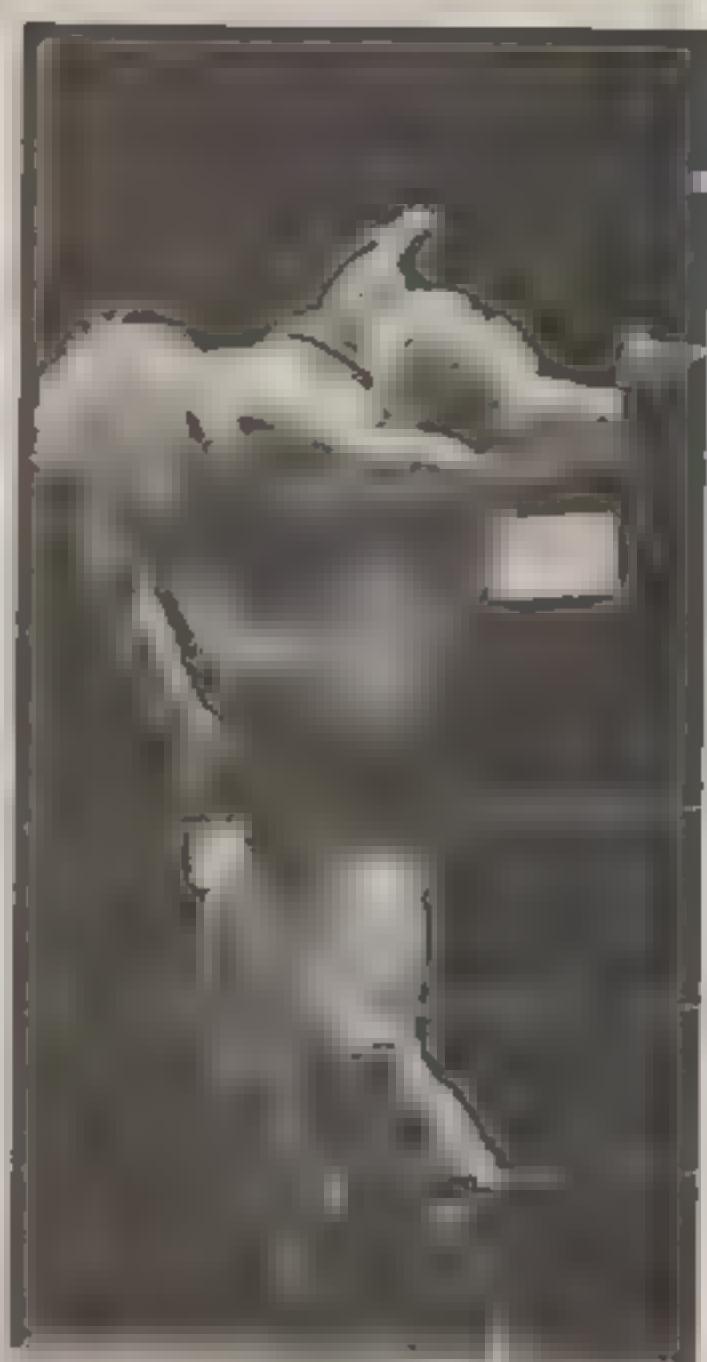


Robertson goes about his business in quiet yet effective fashion. He has been around the world and wrestled the best. Dewey applies an armbar on Austin Idol (above) and bodyslams Nick Bockwinkel (top right).

Brutal feuds that embroil wrestlers in continuing campaigns of hatred are also a high priority. In this very issue you will see a story on the battle between Masked Superstar and Mr.

Wrestling II

Reporting is by its very nature an event-oriented activity. As journalists, we react to events in the world of wrestling. We notice a title change or an overt act of

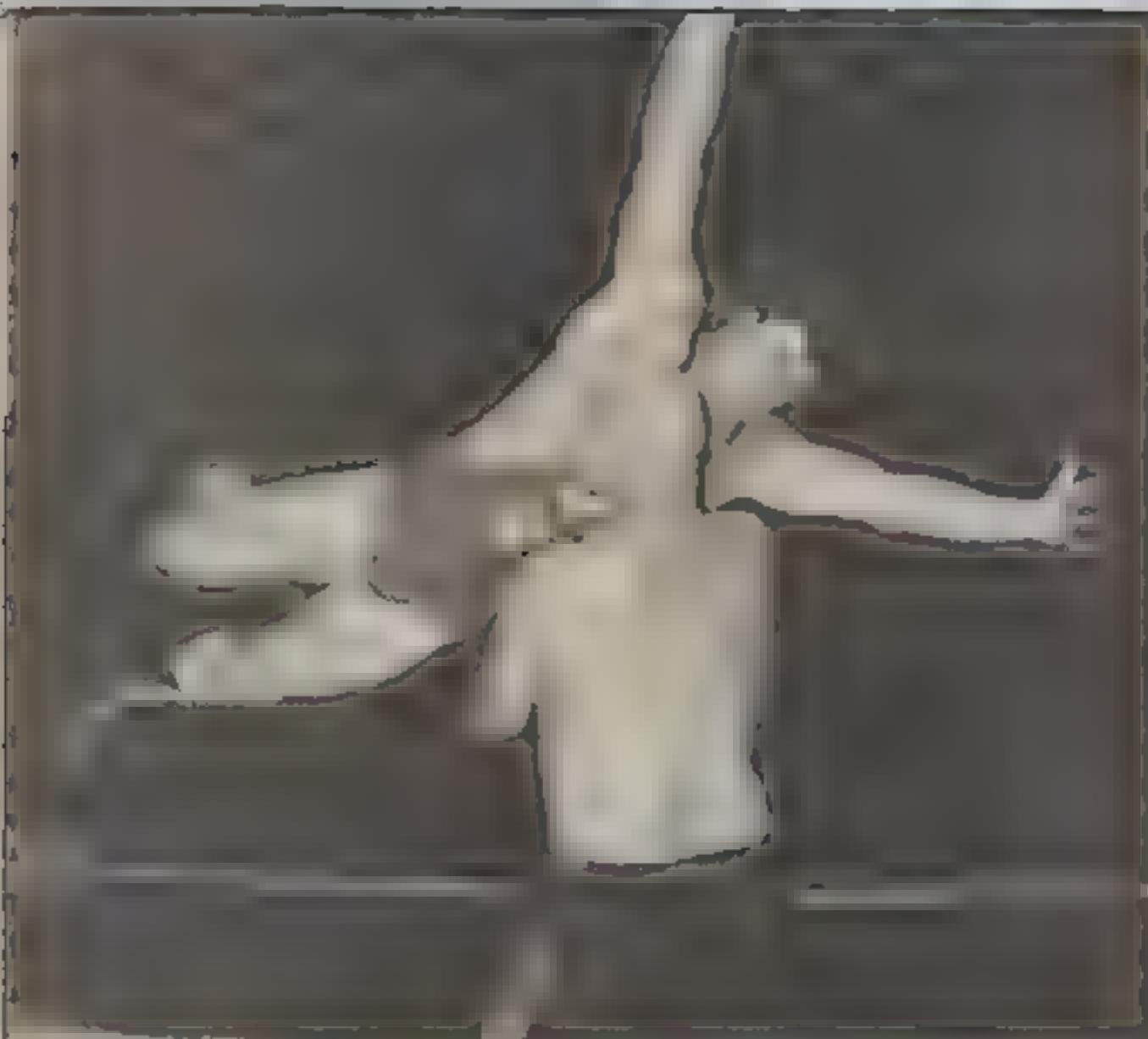


brutality as something which demands to be known by fans around the world.

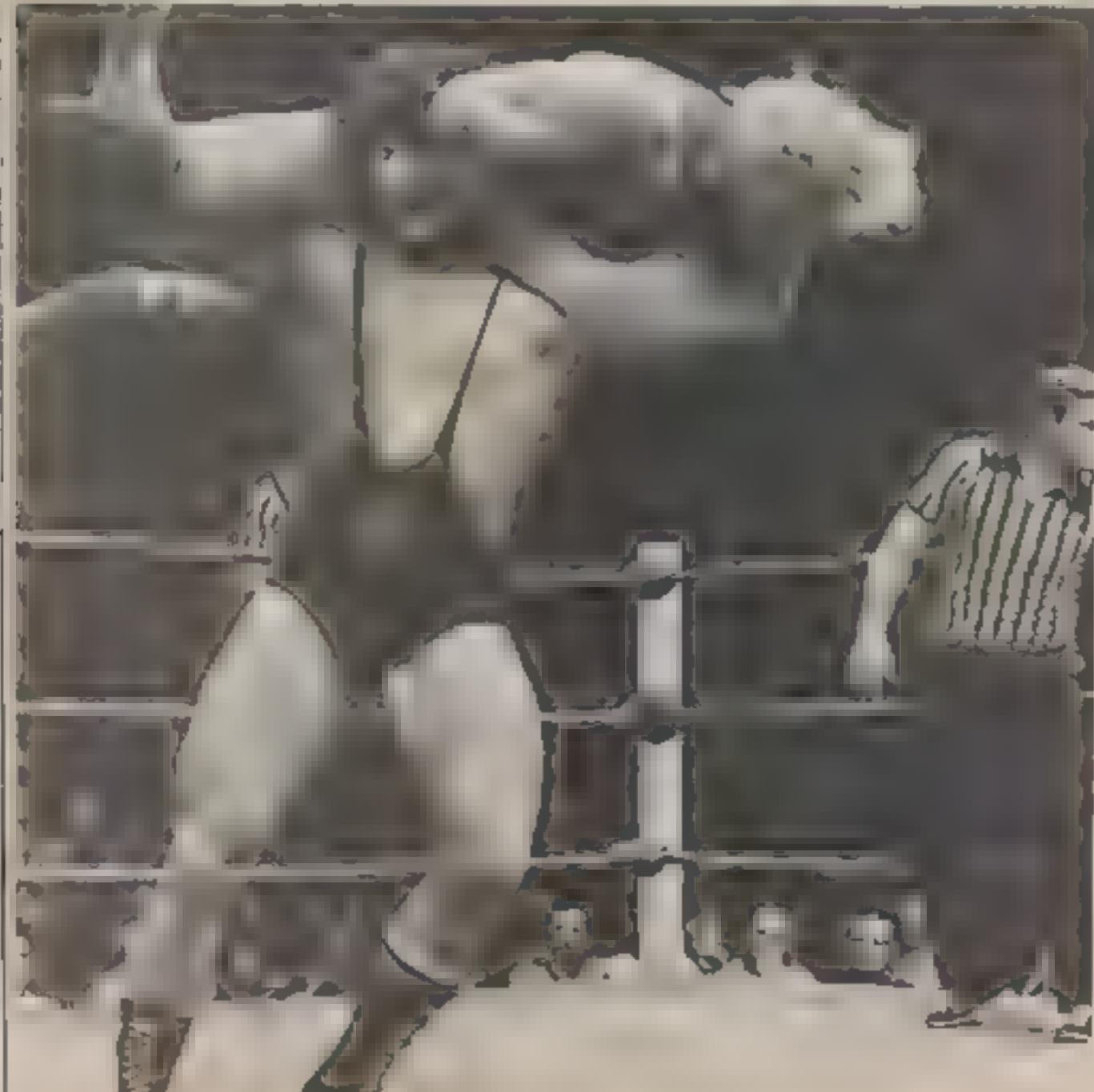
When a man like Dewey Robertson comes along, a man who earns the respect of the fans quietly and without a great deal of braggadocio, a man who strings together titles and honors with humility and grace, he tends to get lost in the shuffle.

Over the past few years, Robertson deserved better than we gave him.

Of course we knew about the fact that he had been Canadian champion. We realize that along with George Wells, Dewey was



Flying from the top turnbuckle, Robertson finds his target, Baron Von Raschke (above). The former Canadian champion hoists Kirby on his shoulders for an arm bar spin (below).



Mid-Atlantic tag team champion
We know that Robertson has been
wrestling in main events all across
the country

Inexcusably, there was always
something else to attract our
attention, there was always a
wrestler more colorful, always a
championship title more
"important" that offered story
material. Dewey Robertson
seemed forever relegated to the
back burner of wrestling
journalism

Sometimes a story on Dewey
was simply mislimed. In the
production of magazines, there is
an inevitable lag between the time a
story is written and the time the
magazine makes it to the
newsstands. If the Canadian
championship changes hands
during this time lag, it obviously
won't make it into the magazine.
This, too, is the quirk of fate which
seems to have followed Dewey
Robertson.

As always, though, the fans have
the last word. Never let it be said
that our editors do not read all the
letters that enter these offices, for
we do. And when a flood of mail
demanding more information on
Dewey Robertson made itself
apparent, when letters began to
take us to task for ignoring this
admittedly fine wrestler, we
realized that a grave wrong must
be corrected.

So we apologize to Dewey
Robertson who has deserved better
in the past, and will receive better
in the future.

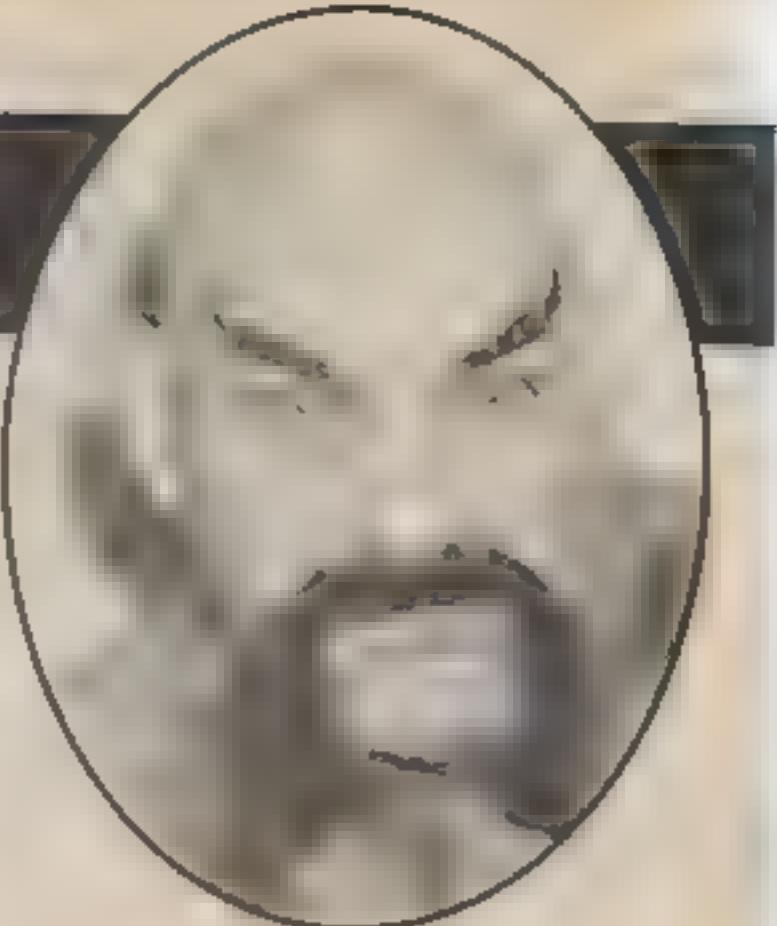
As for the present, we wish to
inform all readers that Robertson
is currently wrestling in the
Missouri area. His major
campaign in recent months has
been against Crusher Blackwell, a
man who has given Robertson, and
other fan favorites, great trouble.

We hope to have more on the
Robertson-Blackwell feud in the
near future, and hope that this
apology, along with the fine action
photos on these pages, will in some
small measure make up for the
wrongs of the past. □

OX BAKER

He had grown accustomed to the boos.
He expected them every time he
entered the ring. He never realized
how much it bothered him until he had
something to compare it to.

Now Ox Baker is cheered when he enters
the ring and it has given him a
new outlook on life



"THE FANS AIN'T SO BAD"

OX BAKER IS a strange man. One side of him demands discipline. He must have order. That's why he ties his laces in exactly the same way every single match. First the left one, then the right. Ox would never

deviate from that ritual.

Then there's the matter of his handlebar moustache. Ox has a strange procedure here. First he dips some honey along the edges, then rinses that and the top of his head with baking soda

Next comes a shower. With his boots on. Finally Ox is ready to wage war.

One last addition completes Baker's arsenal. The fans. No, he doesn't include them. In fact, Baker does his best to ignore



them. They interject themselves with vigorous boos and derisive shouts. They don't like Ox Baker. No reason they should like Ox Baker. Mr. Charm School he ain't.

"Fans are a pain in the butt," Baker has said on many occasions.

One of the beauties of professional wrestling is its capacity to absorb change. Wrestlers reflect this unique skill and Ox Baker is no exception.

But Baker is a bit more

Mark Lewin works over Ox Baker outside the ring. The fans cheered for Baker during this match, a change he could have difficulty getting used to.

obstinate than most. He has years of suspicion behind his disdain of the fans. It took one special incident involving one special person to open the door into Baker's heart and permit some light to enter.

Her name is Evelyn Korba. She's 45 and lives in Montgomery, Alabama. We didn't get the story from her. Nor did we get it from Baker. This startling revelation came in the form of a letter from her son, Kelvin.

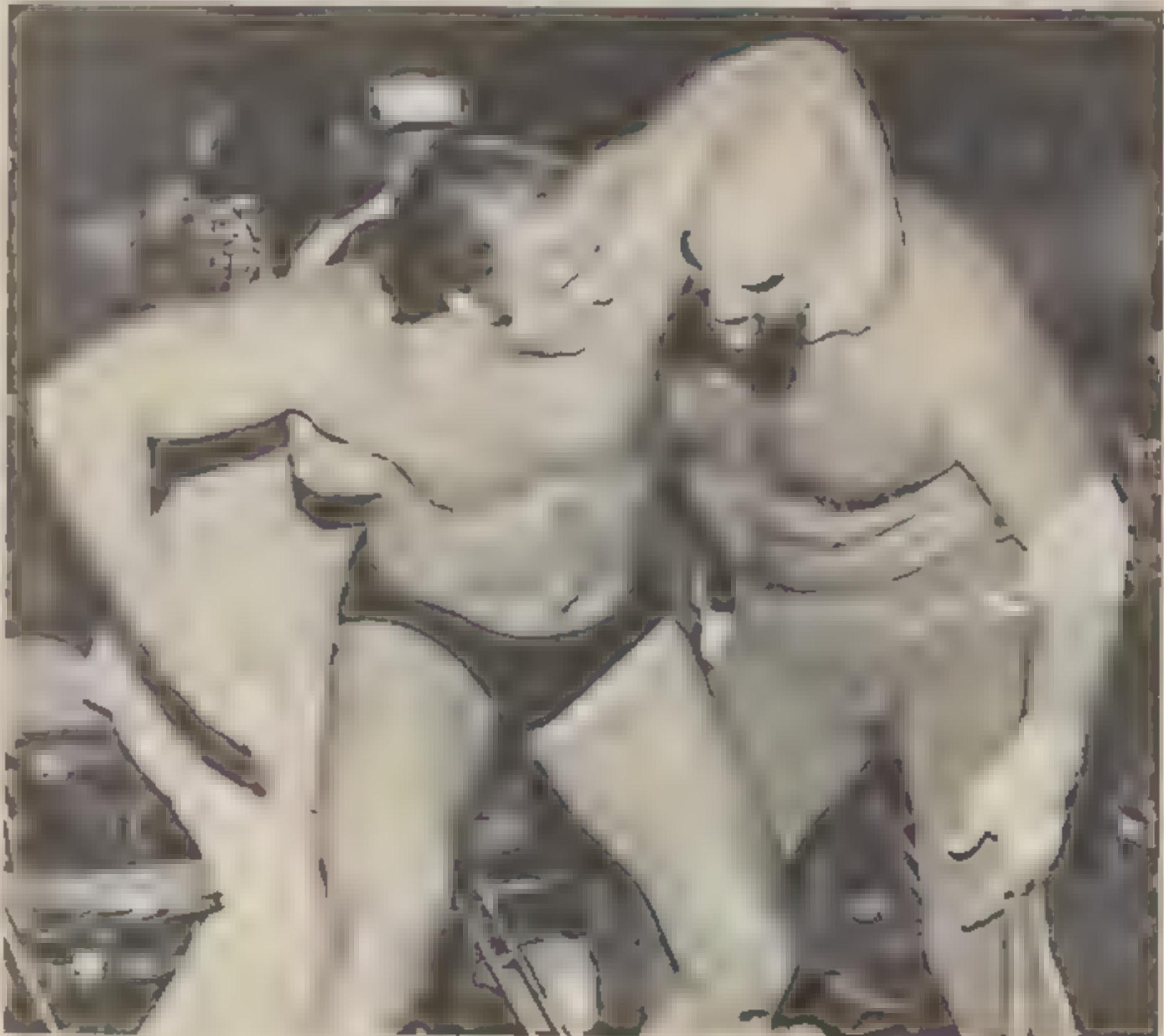
"My mother has been an Ox Baker fan for a very long time," wrote Kelvin Korba. "She even had a scrapbook put together. I always read in your magazines what a bad fellow Ox is, but let

me tell you what he did for my Mom."

Right before Baker's match against Mark Lewin, my Mom went to the dressing room. She had her Ox Baker scrapbook with her and Mom wanted Ox to sign it. From what Mom told me, Baker was shocked and flattered that a fan would care enough about him to compile a scrapbook. Baker was so pleased he said he'd reconsider his attitude toward the fans." Kelvin's letter continued.

"I hope you find the space to print a portion of this letter because it shows another side of Ox Baker that few people are aware of," Kelvin concluded.

When confronted with this



story, Baker became flustered, then angry.

"You idiots believe everything you read? Hah, didn't know you creeps could read," Baker said laughing bitterly. "Yeah, I remember this old broad comin' into my locker room before the match. Actually, she had to stay in the corridor and I was nice enough to come out and give her a few wonderful moments of my time."

"Yeah, yeah, she had some kind of scrapbook. Course it was nice was about me, wasn't it?" Baker said, laughing. "I autographed it and told her a few words of wisdom, not too many, wouldn't want her to get spoiled."

So what's the big deal? Think

Baker managed to break out of Lewin's sleeper hold (below) and soon after Lewin raked Baker's eyes to break his bearhug (right).



got nothin' better to do with my valuable time than to spend it takin' to some broad? I mean, the fans cheered for me that night, okay, it was kinda nice. The fans ain't so bad, I guess. Least some of 'em have half a brain. Like Evelyn, uh, Mrs. Korba. She has something of a mind.

"Hey, check out who her

favorite is right?" Baker said laughing loudly.

Initially, Baker appeared uncomfortable with fans cheering him against Lewin. His first few maneuvers were awkwardly implemented, revealing a genuine confusion. For someone like Baker, a stark change like this causes his rhythm to go awry.

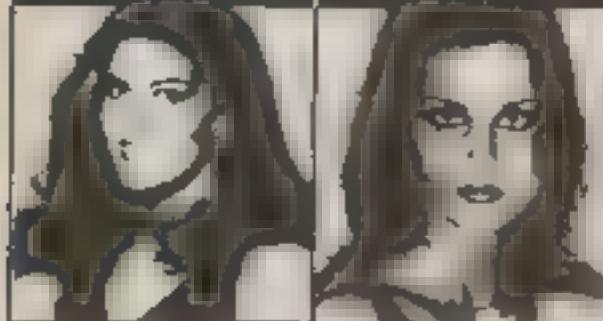
It's strange," Baker conceded.

Despite all this, Baker managed to squeak past Lewin.

"Ah come off it, the fans had nothin' to do with it," Baker said waving his hand. "I was great before the fans cheered and I'll be great when they boo again. All that counts is Ox Baker. And I'm mighty fine." □

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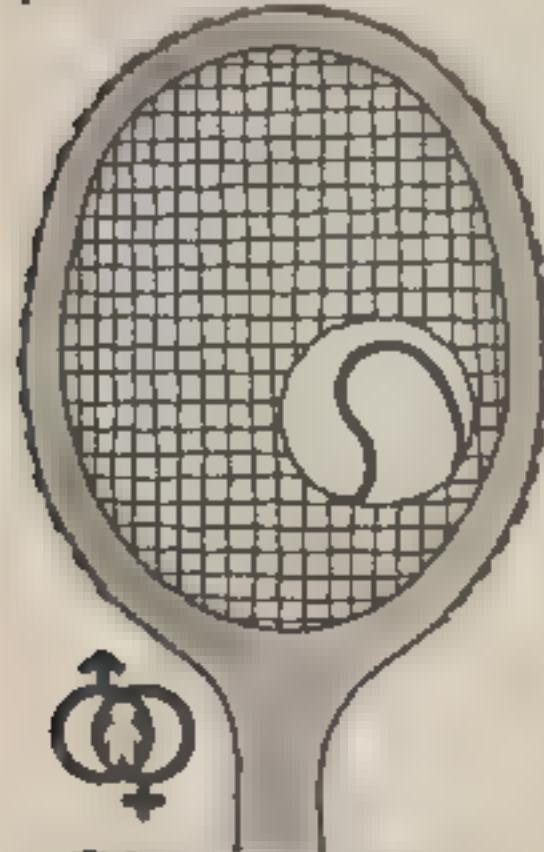
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WRESTLER OF THE MONTH

(Continued from Page 14)



Backlund credits manager Arnold Skoaland for much of his success. Skoaland, Bob says, prepares him both physically and mentally for every match.

"Things never get too bad because Arnold always has me prepared for the worst. He's a very gifted man, and he can be my manager for as long as he wants."

Bob's modesty prevents him from bragging about his many victories. Over the years, he has retained his title against the challenges of Superstar Billy Graham, Hulk Hogan, Sgt. Slaughter, Ivan Koloff, Peter Maivia, Ken Patera, and a host of other top mat stars. His battles against Greg Valentine and Magnificent Muraco have become almost legendary among veteran wrestling analysts. Even if he never wrestles again, Bob has already won a place of honor in the wrestling record books.

Happily, there should be many more years of top battles in which Bob will emerge victorious. For a

man who has warred against such dangerous opponents, he is remarkably fit. Good health and rigorous training keep him from serious injury.

Until it was brought to our attention, we hadn't realized Backlund's fourth anniversary was approaching. The man who pointed it out to us was none other than former champion Bruno Sammartino. He felt attention must be paid to a record of such astounding accomplishment.

"No one knows more than me," Bruno said, "how difficult it is to handle a long title reign. When Bob first won the title I thought he was just a lucky kid who'd hold the title for a few weeks. Over the years, he's proven himself over and over. There's already a record of which he can be proud. Right now, I can't see anyone who can defeat him. He's a superb athlete and a great champion."

We're happy to agree with Bruno and name Bob Backlund as our Wrestler of the Month. □

Replacing Hart until his return is Roddy Piper.

"Piper's a good man," declared Hart. "He'll do a fine job of making sure Kabuki is treated properly."

—B.W. Foreman

NEW YORK, NY—It started as a rumor. But now "The Tattler" has evidence that it is a fact.

Lou Albano offered fellow manager Fred Blassie \$1.3 million for the services of Jesse Ventura and Adrian Adonis. Interestingly, Blassie would still remain manager of the two in singles matches. Albano just wants the rights to Ventura and Adonis in tag team competition.

"Everyone knows these boys, Adonis and Ventura, were tag team champions in the AWA. And that was without the Captain's guidance! Can you imagine how far they'd go with my genius behind them. They'd win the title, cripple a few people, sing a few songs, cook me dinner, make a whole lot of money. I want them. I got to have them. I will have them!"

When Albano is told that he already manages the WWF tag team champions in Fuji and Saito, it doesn't seem to alter his plan.

"The Yankees got Guidry, and they got Gossage warming up in the bullpen. The Captain knows you can never have enough tag teams in the WWF. What if Fuji gets injured? What if Saito bombs Pearl Harbor? Suppose they both choke to death on raw fish? The Captain must be ready, the Captain must be prepared."

There was no word whether Blassie would accept Albano's offer.

—Allison Corey □

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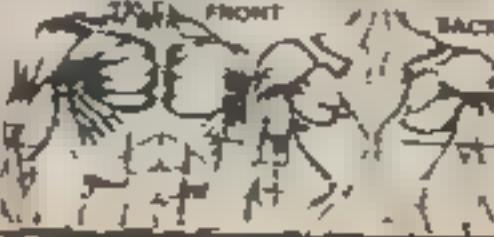
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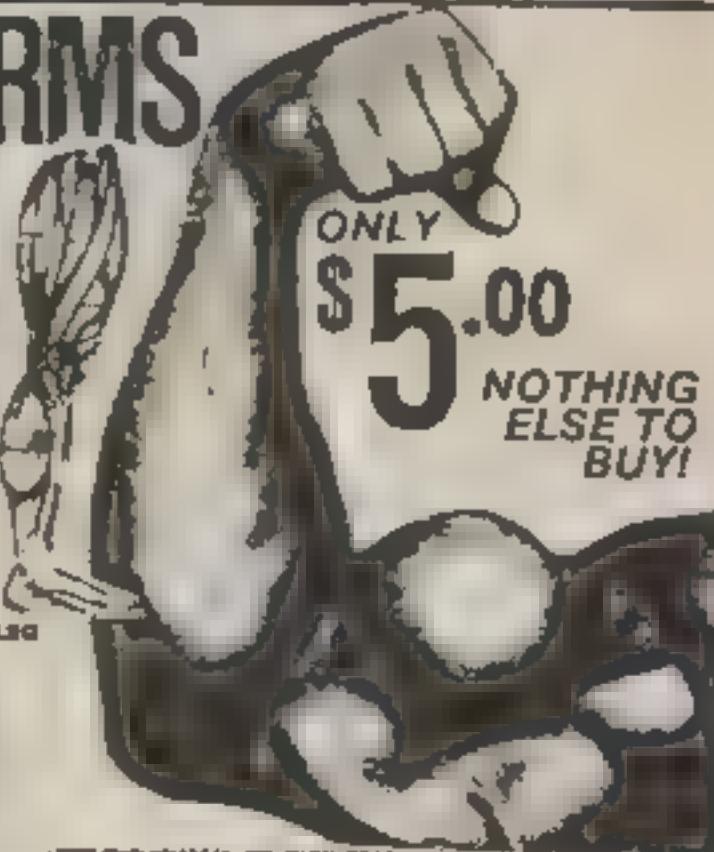
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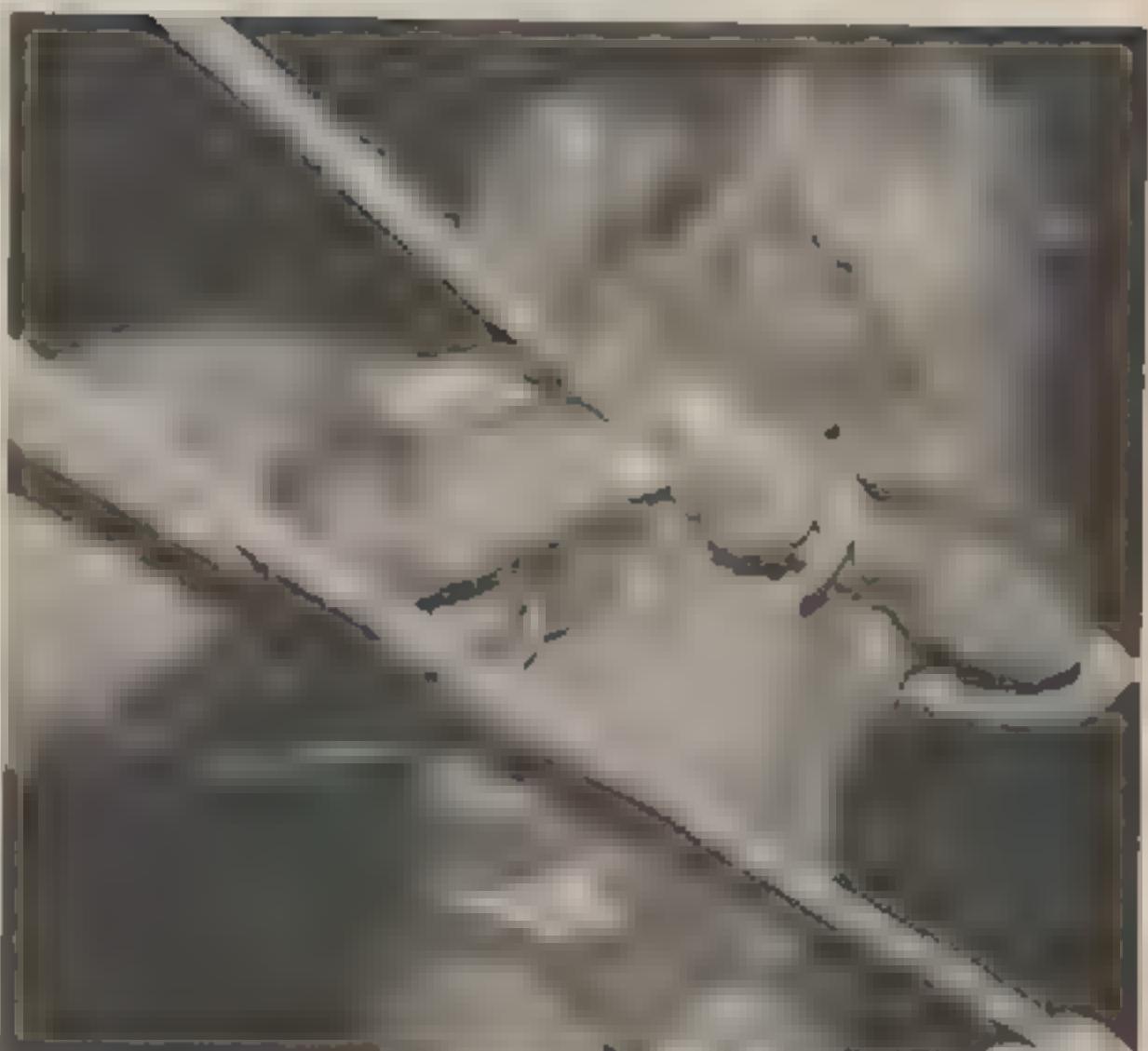
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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from Page 35)



When the physical talent of two wrestlers is this close, intangible factors decide who the better wrestler is. Ric Flair is more experienced, maintains a cooler head and takes advantage of every opportunity that is presented him. That's why he's the NWA champion and Tommy Rich is not.

that unless he radically alters his strategy in the near future, Tommy Rich is forever doomed to be but a contender.

As the bell sounded signalling the start of the match, Flair and Rich glared at each other with two pairs of eyes that confessed nothing but animal viciousness. Then it began.

Tommy Rich went to work on Flair's arms. Catching the champion in an excruciating figure-four armlock, Rich applied pressure enough to drop Flair to his knees and eventually to the mat entirely.

In no time, it looked as if Flair was in serious trouble, yet where a lesser man might have lost his head, Flair proved that he was cut from championship cloth. Muscling his way out of the severity of the armlock, Flair used sheer strength to break the hold and initiate an offensive of

his own.

Before long, it was Rich who was the victim of the figure-four armlock: Ric Flair had momentarily gained control. The match continued in that manner for several minutes. These men are so evenly matched, neither is able to maintain a sustained advantage.

Finesse is an important factor in comparing these two grapplers. Preparing to either suplex or bodyslam Rich, Flair is more at ease with the maneuver, more able to execute the move smoothly. Rich appears to have trouble, as if he were unable to achieve the proper weight balance necessary to perform the maneuver. Flair's expertise allows him to alter his center of gravity ever so slightly with the result being an ability to virtually disarm Rich in the ring.

The facts seem almost too obvious to mention, yet there they are: quite simply, Flair is the better wrestler. He is more seasoned, more calculating, and much less hot headed than Tommy Rich.

Yet the question remains. Since Rich was able to pin Flair, doesn't he deserve the belt? Hasn't he proved to the world that he is better than the champion and should himself be sitting atop the NWA throne?

The answer is no.

"The night I was supposed to wrestle Rhodes and Rich came into the ring instead I decided to just toy with Rich," Flair explained. "I know the rules. Even if Tommy Rich is too stupid to read, ignorance of the law is no excuse. Rich has no excuse for himself and he should never have expected to win the belt if he won that match."

"It's very clear, though, that I was playing with Rich, I was testing him," Flair continued. "It's like having a new car in the winter and purposely causing it to skid, just so you can test to see how it handles on ice. That match was the same thing. I was purposely placing myself in a bad position simply to see how Rich reacted when he had the advantage I never knew since he was never at much of an advantage when I met him in the ring. But now that I do know how he wrestles in a position like that, I'll be better able to defend myself should the situation come up again which I seriously doubt it will."

Crafty, that's the ticket. Whether a predetermined plan or an explanatory afterthought, Flair is very crafty indeed. He knows the rules inside and out and he knows how to make them work to his advantage... even as obscure a rule as the one which applied in the Flair/Rhodes/Rich instance.

Yes Ric Flair is very crafty. He is so very much the champion! □

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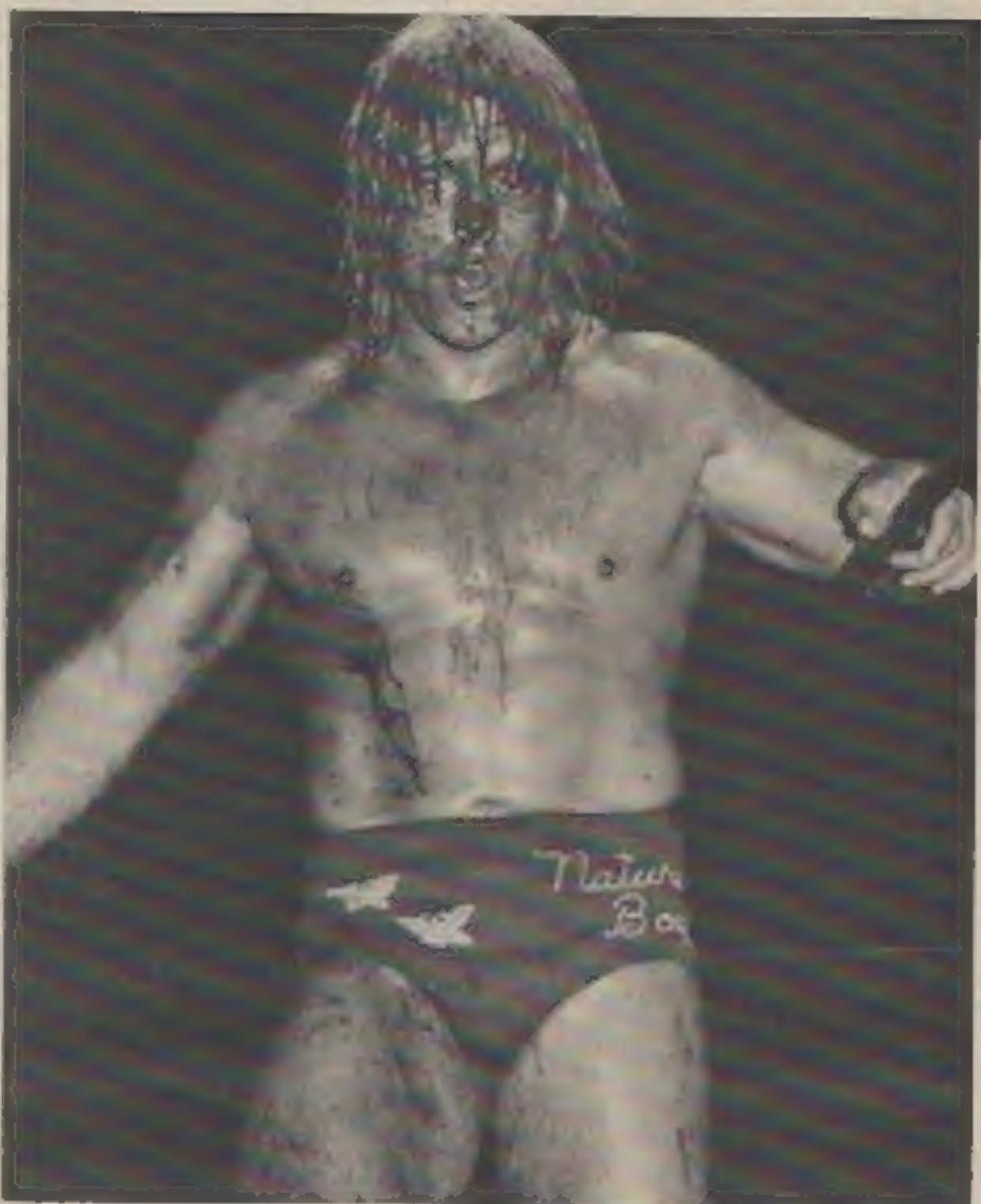
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Inquiring Reporter

(Continued from Page 12)



anything that brings more blood to the ring, and eliminating the disqualifications sounds like a good idea to me."

Peter Glenn, Tampa Bay, FL: "No way, Jose. Wrestling is a sport, not a license to commit wholesale brutality against the weaker man in the ring. The referee's right to disqualify offers at least some measure of control over a match. There's enough brutality in the sport as it is. Look at some of Ric Flair's early title defenses: bloody as all hell. Waiving disqualifications would be an invitation to maim. I can see that at two in the morning in any bar in town, I don't have to pay for an arena seat to see mayhem. Let's keep at least some of the sport in the sport."

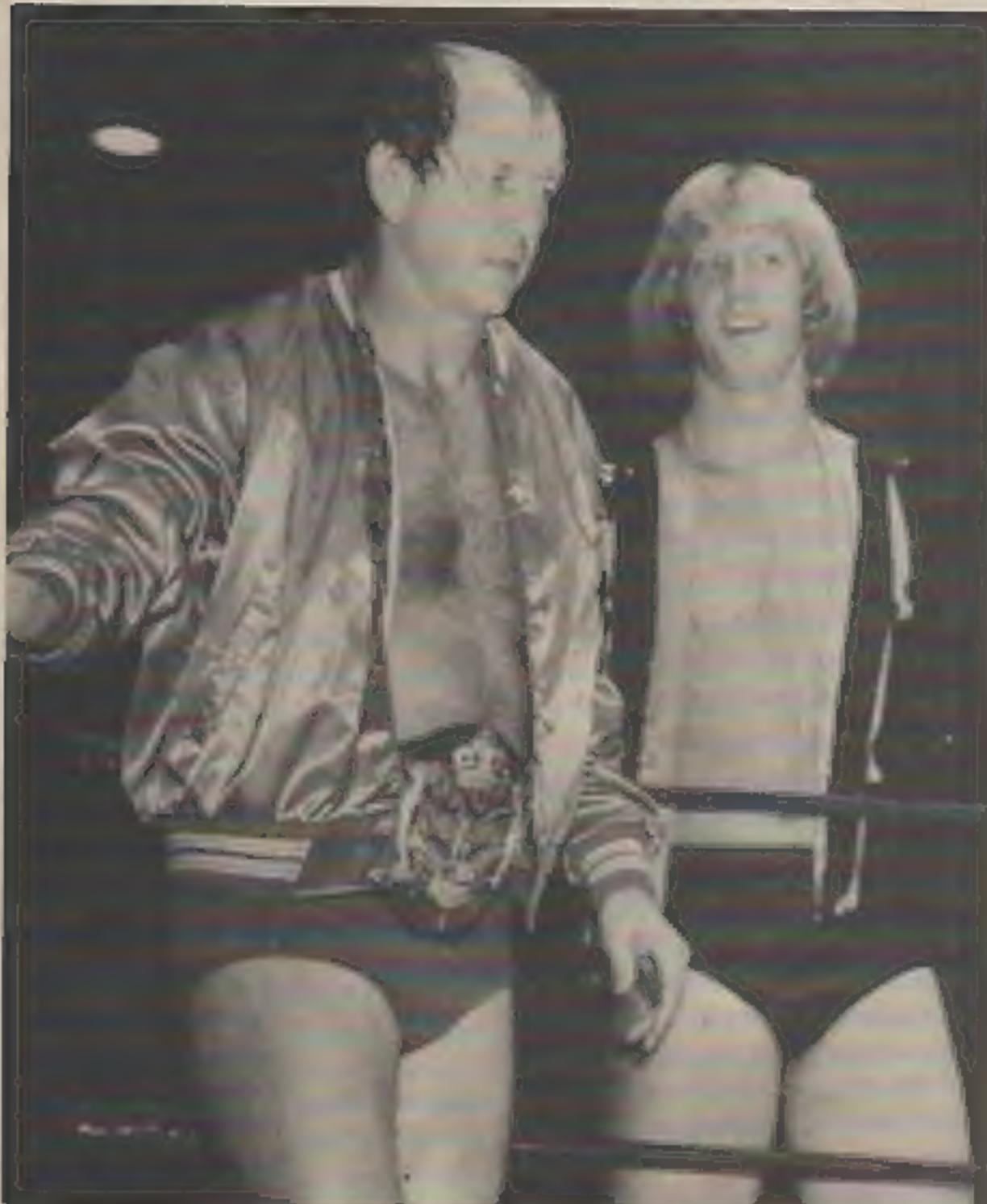
There would be no way to control wrestling's inherent brutality without disqualifications, noted Peter Glenn.

Don Morgan, Minneapolis, MN: "I don't think so. I've seen a lot of Nick Bockwinkel's title defenses, and there are a lot of wrestlers who try to get at his title by some pretty intense cheating. At least the threat of being disqualified keeps everything on the up and up."

George Mason, Alexandria, VA: "What's the difference? I mean, who really cares? You get rid of disqualifications, the sleazeballs are going to cheat and get the title. You keep the rule, the same sleazeballs are going to cheat in the same way. I don't see any difference with or without it. It's a stupid question." □

WE ACCUSE

(Continued from Page 18)



Von Erich has befriended and teamed with Dory Funk Jr., whose family the Von Erichs have long hated. Funk and James J. Dillon are to blame for the horrible change in David Von Erich.

brainwashed a candidate as thoroughly as Dillon and the Funks brainwashed David Von Erich. They did it expertly—and successfully. When David left the Funk's ranch, he was willing to follow Jim Dillon to hell.

It's not overstating the matter to say that may be just where Dillon will lead David. Kerry and Kevin Von Erich tried to reason with their brother. After several discussions that quickly became arguments, David swore he'd never speak to his brothers again about wrestling. Even their father, veteran grappler Fritz Von Erich, can't repair the rift between

his sons.

When David took the Southern title from Jack Brisco, the young man lost more than he won. Any self-respect he might have had was taken from him. Fans called him a disgrace to wrestling, and there was little room for argument. David's gleeful statement, "You can't argue with success," must have sounded hollow even to himself.

We accuse James J. Dillon of tearing apart the Von Erich family. For his 30 pieces of silver earned as David's manager, he betrayed one of America's most important institutions—a family. □

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BACKLUND-MOSCA

(Continued from Page 37)



Backlund viewed this match as one final opportunity to erase any doubt about his superiority over Mosca. The WWF champion squeezes Mosca's head between his thigh and tricep (above) and sends his challenger reeling with a dropkick (opposite right).

Meanwhile, Mosca gloated about the tainted victory of Backlund. To celebrate, he decided to treat himself to a trip to Puerto Rico. A business trip, yes, but Puerto Rico in the dead of winter beats the Northeast any day of the week.

As soon as Mosca decided to

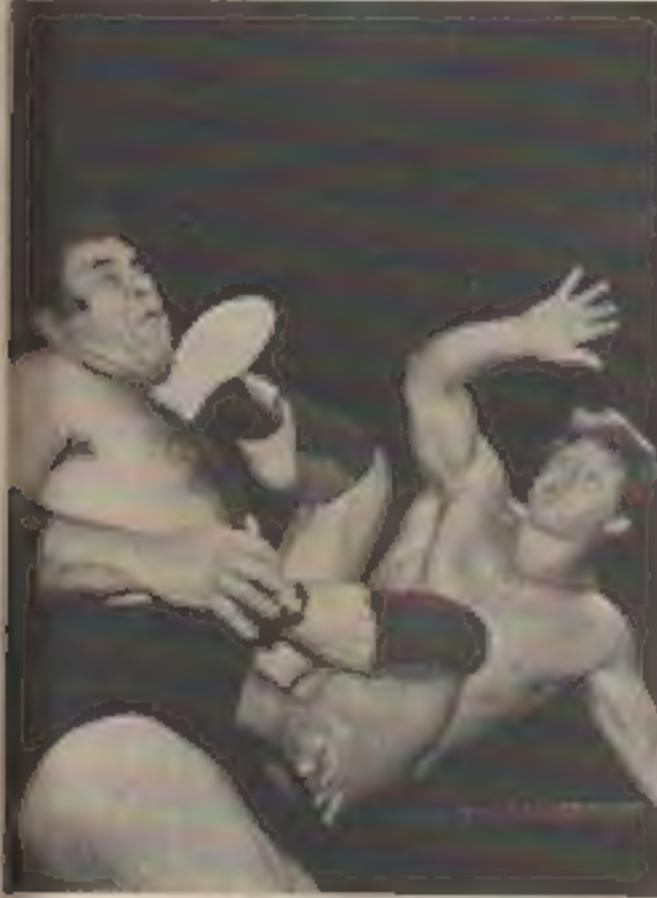
head south, it meant that the war would soon have to end. The final match between Mosca and Backlund was signed, and each wrestler entered into it with mixed emotions.

For Mosca, he simply didn't give a damn. The belt meant nothing, he had scored a moral

victory over the champion already. If he could injure Backlund in the bargain, it would be all the sweeter.

For Backlund, it was a matter of pride. He had to prove to the fans what he already knew himself—that he was a champion worthy of their respect and support.

The match was a free-for-all, and Mosca eventually managed to get himself disqualified. It was neither the vengeful retribution that Backlund desired nor the crippling massacre that Mosca would have wanted.



What it was, in fact, was a low-key finish to a high-energy feud. The wounds of the war remained after that final match, and though Backlund emerged with his title intact, he suffered damage that was much deeper.

On the surface, Backlund won the wars. He has his title, he has the belt around his waist. Yet the damage done to his reputation during his campaign against Mosca, and the glee with which Mosca exited the ring during that final match, make the obvious question posed in our headline much more difficult to answer clearly. □

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